

Jimmy Makes the Varsity



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JIMMY MAKES THE VARSITY



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Jimmy was hit by an avalanche that roared and yelled as it hit him

Jimmy Makes the Varsity

By

JONATHAN BROOKS

Illustrated by

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INTRODUCTION

“JIM made the varsity his first year——”

How often have you read that statement, and marveled at the ability, nerve and good luck of the sophomore out for football? Without giving you time to answer that question, I shall ask another: Do you believe these stories of athletes who make the varsity their first year?

And now I shall deny you the privilege of answering both questions, because I wish to answer them myself. I have read many such stories, and I do not believe them. The best athlete I know anything about is Jimmy Byers, and it took him nineteen years to make the varsity football team at Jordan University. He could not have made the varsity his first year, for he was still chewing on a teething ring at that time.

Making the varsity is a long-time job, and to prove it, I have written down the story of Jimmy Byers. He required nineteen years, as I have said, but I am telling you only of the last two and a quarter years. It was in that period that anybody could have seen he was reaching toward varsity heights; whereas, in the first seventeen, he might have been headed in some other direction, for all anybody could tell.

And even so, in the period I am telling you about, he was not always thinking about making the varsity. His toiling to the heights was much like climbing a steep staircase. He thought about each step as he went, and was careful not to stumble and fall. If he had been thinking of the top step, or looking up at it

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all the while, he would have had so many chances to stumble over the immediate steps that he probably would have fallen, and, consequently, never reached the top.

If you will think about that for a moment before starting up the stairs with Jimmy, you will understand why I have written *Jimmy Makes the Varsity* in such a queer fashion. Step by step, each step a battle, with another, or others, or himself,—that is the way Jimmy made the varsity.

—JONATHAN BROOKS

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JIMMY MAKES THE VARSITY



JIMMY MAKES THE VARSITY

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST STEP

(of the steps to be described)

"WHEN you 'can't go another step' is the best time to start."

Except for that framed motto on the wall over his head, Colonel Wagner's office resembled a court-room during a trial. Gray-haired and grizzled, the Colonel sat behind his desk, very grave and stern unless a slight twinkle in his eyes captured attention. Lieutenant Ellery Coleman, in charge of military training and athletics at Lockerbie Hall, sat in the middle of the room facing him. Flanking Lieutenant Coleman, on his left and also facing Colonel Wagner, were ranged five boys, the first team of Lockerbie's basketball squad. Flanking him on the right, were five boys of the second team.

No jury was present, for Colonel Wagner, in all Lockerbie affairs, constituted the court of last resort. He heard the testimony and reviewed the evidence in every case, and he alone framed judgment. His rulings, always just and fair, ended every contention; but in this case the Colonel, usually prompt, hesitated.

"I have heard all the testimony," he said. "Lieutenant Coleman states that Captain Armstrong and three other members of the first team have broken training. He states he has suspended Captain Armstrong and three others, and that the fifth player has

quit, in sympathy with the other four. Is that correct?"

He looked at the Lieutenant, a slender, trimly built young chap. Lieutenant Coleman nodded. He looked at the four players sitting with Captain Armstrong. The captain, a tall, slim youngster, sulkily ducked his head in agreement.

"Now, the captain and the other players," continued Colonel Wagner, "state that the Lieutenant's discipline and training system are too severe; that there is no game for almost two weeks, until Hillgate Academy comes here; and that the Lieutenant might reasonably give his men a little vacation. Is that the case, Captain?"

Again Captain Armstrong ducked his head.

"Very well, then," said Colonel Wagner, after a pause. "I do not know whether you boys know what mutiny is. I am pretty sure that Lieutenant Coleman knows what discipline is. I am inclined to insist that he enforce it. You boys should realize that discipline is the first principle of military law, as well as athletic law. Every man must follow his leader.

"If this happened in military training, I should be forced to punish all of you. In the army, refusal to obey orders is a serious offense, and calls for strenuous punishment. But in athletics, I hardly know what to do. Your games are your own. You know that I am not inclined to much sympathy with athletic sports, and for that reason I shall, I fear, lean over backward in an effort not to be too harsh. I must not be unfair to you boys. At the same time, all my training calls for fullest support of Lieutenant Coleman. What am I to do?"

He paused. Lieutenant Coleman, catching the twinkle in Colonel Wagner's eye, said nothing. He realized the Colonel was testing the boys. Neither

Captain Armstrong nor any of the first team spoke, but sat glaring at the floor.

"I mean what I say, boys," said Colonel Wagner. "I want to know what I am to do. What would be fair?"

Still Lieutenant Coleman held his silence, and the boys on the first team, stirring uneasily, could only look at one another with sidelong glances. Colonel Wagner looked at the Lieutenant, and then at the first team. Finally he glanced at the second team. As he did so, one of these boys stood up.

"Colonel Wagner, sir," he said, and saluted gravely. It was Jimmy Byers, a rather undersized, serious youngster of sixteen, the son of an old army major, come all the way east from Wisconsin to Lockerbie, in the intermountain country, because his father before him had prepped at Lockerbie. "If you please, sir," said Jimmy, "I have an idea."

"That's good. What is it?" asked the Colonel, shifting in his chair.

"Well, sir, it is this," Jimmy began nervously. "The second team takes no part in this case. But we think a team has to train hard for all its games. We think the coach is right, but we hate to see the team broken up, or basketball stopped. So I would like to make this proposition—the second team will undertake to play the Hillgate game, without the help of either the coach or the first-team players. We think we can prove that training and discipline are needed, and we'll supply our own discipline and do our own training. Then, after that game, we will leave it to you to decide what we shall do next."

"That's an idea," exclaimed the Colonel. "Although I'm willing to say right now that the second team can step in and become the first from now on. But I'll not do that. I'll just take this proposition

Byers makes, as he makes it. Does that suit you, Lieutenant?"

"Yes, sir," Lieutenant Coleman replied.

"How about you, Captain Armstrong?"

"Aw, Hillgate has licked us, and we can lick the scrubs with one hand," muttered the captain.

"That is not the point," exclaimed the Colonel. "Are you willing to step to one side, while Lieutenant Coleman steps to the other?"

"Yes, I guess so," grumbled Captain Armstrong, looking at the other first-team players. They had looked forward to a career as martyrs, following suspension by Colonel Wagner. The compromise unsettled them.

"What is it?" demanded Colonel Wagner sharply.

"Yes, sir," replied the captain shamefacedly.

"Very well, then," snapped the Colonel. "That is all."

"Come on, fellows," said Jimmy Byers to his mates. "Let's start training right now by getting to bed early."

"Good night, boys," said the Colonel, rising.

"Good night, sir," came in a chorus, as the boys stood up and started for the door.

Lieutenant Coleman stood up, but at a sign from the Colonel did not depart. As the door closed behind the boys, he joined Colonel Wagner in a hearty laugh.

"I'd begun to be afraid," said the Colonel, "that this generation was worthless. Cake-eaters, but this boy Byers——"

"A regiment of Byers boys could lick a whole army of those first-team fellows," exclaimed the Lieutenant, "except at basketball."

"And that doesn't matter much," Colonel Wagner said, "except that it shows their spirit. Wish we had a dozen more like him."

"Well, those other four with him are right on his heels," replied the Lieutenant. "I'll keep my hands off. Give a month's pay if they'd whip Hillgate."

"I'll back them," vouchsafed the Colonel. "If they can enforce discipline, the effect will be better than any law I could lay down."

Meantime, a brief colloquy took place outside the Colonel's room. Jimmy Byers and his second team reached the door first, and were followed by the disgruntled first team. Nothing was said until they were down the hall out of earshot.

"Grand-standers," growled Captain Armstrong after Jimmy.

"Come on, fellows, let's get some sleep," said Jimmy. "And first thing in the morning, each guy run one mile before breakfast."

"You'll run farther'n that to catch Hillgate," laughed one of the first team.

"Then, in the afternoon, we'll meet at the gym," added Jimmy, ignoring the remark.

"We'll show you guys up," called Captain Armstrong.

"They'll show 'emselves up," laughed another.

Some of the first-team players were for starting a row with the second five, but Jimmy and his mates went about their business of getting to their rooms and to bed.

As Lieutenant Coleman said, the second team was none too strong, all the boys lacking natural basketball equipment. All of them were shorter and more slightly built than the first-team players. Not one of them was tall enough to jump center successfully, and only one seemed sturdy enough to make a pretense of playing back guard. As predicted, it looked as if they could only show themselves up.

But promptly the next afternoon, the five of them

met in the gym, and sat down on the floor to talk things over. Captain Armstrong, the first team and some friends were sitting along the side-lines to watch practise, regaling themselves with choice humor.

"Never get any practise sittin' down," called one of the boys.

"Listen, fellows, I've got an idea," said Jimmy, in the midst of the little group. "Don't pay any attention to them. Now then, we got to do something. I've been thinking. We haven't any center, and we haven't any basket shooters. We haven't even got a big back guard. All we can do, then, is to get in shape to do everything that any player has to do. We gotta develop our wind and our legs, so we can stand a lot harder work than ever."

"But wind and endurance won't win any games for us," interposed Les Moore, biggest of the group. "We've got to have something else."

"That's what I'm getting at," said Jimmy. "Listen, out where I come from there was a coach in a university who was in the same fix Lockerbie's in now. He had a lot of players, but no tall centers or back guards, no basket shots to feed the ball to, nor anything else. Now, listen, I'm going to whisper——"

He did so, and only the five of them knew what was said. They huddled on the floor a long time, chattering quietly among themselves, until finally, all enthusiastic over Jimmy's program, they jumped up and began practising basket shots close up. After fifteen minutes of that, they ran about the floor making short passes to one another without thought of the baskets. For all this, there was derisive comment from the side-lines.

"Now, then, fellows," said Jimmy, "let's have some wind sprints."

So they raced up and down the floor, sometimes the

length of it, sometimes half the distance, until all of them were winded. They then called it a day. Captain Armstrong and his following had a lot of fun at their expense, but the next day when he brought his crowd back, he found the doors of the gymnasium locked. Jimmy asked Colonel Wagner for secret practise, and obtained permission to close the building.

"Smart guys," growled Captain Armstrong. "We'll show them a trick of our own. We'll boycott their blamed scrub basketball team. Any guy that goes to the Hillgate game is no friend of mine."

The other four players of the old first team adopted the same slogan, with the result that, while the old players were intensely curious, nobody paid much attention to Jimmy Byers, Les Moore and their three companions. Each morning the boys went out for their mile run. Each afternoon, with the gym doors locked, they worked faithfully.

"My dad always said," Jimmy lectured his mates, "that anything worth doing at all, is worth doing for all you've got. If we're going to play basketball at all, let's give it everything we've got."

His spirit carried all five through a really grueling ten days of preparation for the struggle with Hillgate. Handicapped by the lack of a team with which to scrimmage, the boys redoubled their efforts. The boycott lost its effect when the novelty wore off, with the result that as the game approached, Lockerbie took more and more interest. What could these scrub players be doing? What was their idea? How did they figure to play Hillgate, which had beaten Armstrong's five?

Curiosity rallied to the aid of school spirit, and when the Hillgate team arrived for the game, every boy and man, student and instructor in Lockerbie Hall turned out. Colonel Wagner and Lieutenant

Coleman were the first to arrive at the gym, both interested in the experiment in discipline. Captain Armstrong and his old first team were the last to arrive, abandoning their boycott at the last minute and sneaking furtively into the gym.

Inklings that Jimmy and his team had something new lent an added interest to a situation over which the school was already at fever heat. And after all, even if Armstrong's team had been in the right, and Lieutenant Coleman in the wrong, this was Lockerbie's team engaged with Hillgate, and every loyal Lockerbie man turned out to root. And every loyal Lockerbie man, in those days as now, meant every Lockerbie man.

"Now, listen, you guys," proclaimed Les Moore, in the dressing-room, "we're gonna go out there and bust ourselves. Every one of us has to play the whole game. We haven't got a single sub. See?"

"And remember, Wilson, and you, John Waite, and you, Thurston," spoke up Jimmy Byers, "we line up on our side, across the floor. We play close together. We all go down together when one of us gets the ball. We all go back toward our goal when they get the ball. Only Les Moore stays all the time at our end, and Les can come as far as the middle, see? Always pass to the nearest guy, and never shoot for the basket till we're close to it!"

"Another thing," exclaimed Les Moore. "Listen, pay no 'tention to the score. I'll kill any guy I catch lookin' at the score-board, or askin' what the score is," and he glared savagely around him. "Keep goin', if it's a million in our favor, or a million in theirs."

"Let's go, gang," yelled Jimmy Byers, and the five of them ran out of the dressing-room, on to the gymnasium floor where Hillgate's rangy, flashy-looking team was already practising shots. Looking like

schoolboys beside the taller Hillgate five, Lockerbie's scrubs ran hurriedly about the floor passing the ball among themselves instead of shooting at the baskets. Then the referee blew his whistle, and the loyal Lockerbie rooters gave a rousing cheer.

Jimmy crouched at center ready for the jump against the Hillgate center, a gangling, long-armed and long-legged chap who stood almost six feet tall. The contrast between them was illustrative of the contrast between the two teams as a whole. Only Les Moore, back under the Lockerbie basket, approached the size of the man opposite him.

"Those kids'll never touch the ball," muttered Armstrong.

"Our boys look like children beside the Hillgate team," remarked Lieutenant Coleman to Colonel Wagner.

"But they look like scrappers to me," the Colonel replied.

Up went the ball, the Hillgate center won the tip-off with ease, and slapped the ball to a Hillgate forward. In less than thirty seconds, with the Lockerbie boys hardly touching the ball, Hillgate scored a field goal.

"I told you so," said Captain Armstrong.

For the first five minutes, it appeared that the former captain knew whereof he spoke. Hillgate, playing an old-fashioned game of long passes between players stationed at more or less fixed posts, kept the ball high up in the air. One forward hovered always near the basket, awaiting a pass from the center or the other forward, for a short shot. One guard remained under the Hillgate goal, and the other rarely ventured past the center.

Jimmy Byers and his scrubs, however, swarmed all about the playing floor, always on the run, always

alert, trying to break down every pass, attempting to smother every shot. But at the end of the first five minutes, the score was fourteen to three, against the scrubs.

"What's the score?" panted John Waite, taking time out to tie a loose shoe-string.

"Don't know," breathed Jimmy. "Let's go, all the harder. Everybody in every play."

Again the tip-off, and again Hillgate's center slapped the ball. This time, instead of getting it into the hands of one of his own men, he saw the ball intercepted by John Waite. He dived at Waite, but John merely handed the ball to Jimmy Byers, not five feet away, and all the Lockerbie men but Moore started down the floor in a group. They passed the ball around the floor guard while on the run, and headed, all four of them, for the goal. Hillgate's back guard rushed out to meet them, charging on Waite, who had the ball at the instant. Waite again handed the ball to Byers, at arm's length, and Jimmy flipped it to Thurston, going under the basket. Thurston looped the ball over and into the basket. Fourteen to five.

"That's our old five-man team," called Jimmy as he trotted back for the tip-off. He looked around, before he crouched, to make sure Thurston, Waite and Wilson were ranged across the floor behind him.

Hillgate's center, stung because he had not made good on his last play, tried the same play, batting the ball at his left forward. Again Waite intercepted, once more he thrust the ball to Jimmy, and again the four-man attack swept down the floor. Fourteen to seven. Lockerbie rooters woke up.

Angry now, Hillgate's center swept the ball toward his right forward on the tip-off. But this time Wilson swept in, snapped the ball down, dribbled for two steps, and then handed the ball to Jimmy, at his side.

Hillgate's center lunged at Byers, but Jimmy tossed the ball underhand back to Wilson and sidestepped his man. Once more Wilson, Thurston, Jimmy and John Waite charged down the floor. Again the floor guard dived into their midst, and again he missed the ball. For the third time in succession, Lockerbie scored, and Lockerbie rooters went wild. Jimmy himself tossed this basket. Here was a fighting Lockerbie team!

"Time out," yelled the Hillgate captain.

"Hey, you guys," called the Hillgate guards. "We can't stop their whole team. Some of you fellows come back here."

They took their full time out. Jimmy Byers was studying their conference, while he and his scrubs huddled together.

"They're getting tired," he announced. "And they'll try a trick. This time, that center will tip the ball back. Let's all go down the floor as the ball goes up in the air."

Jimmy called the turn. Up went the ball, down the floor rushed Lockerbie's scrubs in a row, save Moore, and the Hillgate center, his eyes in the air on the ball, tipped the leather backward. Instead of landing in the hands of the Hillgate floor guard, however, it dropped into the anxious fingers of Jimmy Byers. Jimmy batted it sidewise, as it came down, into Thurston's hands, and rushed on down the floor. Thurston dribbled three steps, then paused as if to shoot for the goal. Hillgate's back guard rushed at him, and the center charged from behind, all to no purpose. Thurston calmly passed around the guard to John Waite, five feet away, and John tossed to Jimmy, under the basket. Score, since Jimmy tossed the goal, fourteen to eleven, and Lockerbie coming strong.

But why string out a short story? At the half the score was fourteen to thirteen, though none of Lockerbie's scrubs knew it. Jimmy and his team ran off the floor to the dressing-room to rest. Tired, disgruntled and peevish, the Hillgate crack five shambled away to hear a bitter lecture from their coach.

"Fighters, and they've trained fine," commented the pleased Colonel Wagner.

"Yes, and by George, they've sprung some good basketball, too," exclaimed Lieutenant Coleman. "Byers told me about that western five-man defense and four-man attack, but my old first team could never have kept up that terrific gait back and forth on the floor."

"They'll blow up," predicted Armstrong.

Again, as the second half started, it appeared that Armstrong was right. The Hillgate five, stung by their coach's harsh criticism and armed with new tactics to combat the short-passing, five-man game, came back strong. They made three baskets in quick succession, and added a foul goal when Les Moore made his defense of the Lockerbie basket too rough.

Jimmy Byers, Thurston, John Waite and Wilson, however, did not falter. Back and forth they charged relentlessly, trying every second of the time. At the end of five minutes, Hillgate took time out, from sheer weariness. With play resumed, Lockerbie's scrubs went at it harder than ever. Up and down the floor raced the scrubs. Then came a break. Wilson scored under the basket. Twenty-one to fifteen. John Waite registered a free throw after being fouled by the raging Hillgate center. Twenty-one to sixteen.

Waite snagged the next tip-off from the Hillgate center, snapped it to Wilson, who in turn shot to Jimmy, between the center and the Hillgate floor guard. Down went Waite to the right, and Thurston

to the left. Disdaining Byers, the floor guard charged on Waite. The back guard covered Thurston. Jimmy hesitated, dribbled two steps, and then brought up short as if to set for a shot. Hillgate's center flashed past, and whirled to face him. Jimmy motioned as if to shoot, and the center threw up his arms. Thereupon Jimmy tossed to Wilson, rushing past him, and Wilson dribbled under the basket. Wilson shot, but missed, whereupon the tireless Jimmy Byers batted the ball up and into the basket as it came down off the boards. Twenty-one to eighteen.

Hillgate scored on a long shot and then called time out. But the rest did no good, for, a minute after play resumed, Lockerbie's closely knit attack (just like football interference, but with the ball changing hands instead of being carried by one man, as Lieutenant Coleman exclaimed to Colonel Wagner) registered another basket. Twenty-three to twenty.

Hillgate's coach sent in a substitute. The sub brought instructions. Each Hillgate man got orders to cover one Lockerbie scrub.

It was an age before any more scoring was done. The ball moved back and forth on the floor like a ping-pong ball over a table. But it went in short passes Hillgateward, in long shots when Hillgate got hold of it. Now the early morning, mile runs and the afternoon wind sprints got in their effect for Jimmy and his scrubs. Though breathing hard, they were still going strong. Hillgate men were fighting for wind, struggling for needed endurance.

A long Hillgate pass was caught near the Lockerbie basket by Les Moore, and back came the Lockerbie scrubs to take it down the floor again. All of them were covered. Les Moore dribbled slowly toward the center. Jimmy Byers slipped away from Hillgate's center, and took Moore's short pass.

"Down the floor, Les," he yelled, and the back guard charged for the Hillgate basket. Jimmy dribbled two steps after him, but a warning yell from frenzied Lockerbie rooters assailed his ears. He flipped the ball at Moore, but Les was not ready for it. He could not recover in time to shoot before running out of bounds, but he did bat the ball at Wilson. Hillgate's back guard knocked the ball out of Wilson's hands, but he batted it directly at Jimmy, again coming down the floor with the Hillgate center on his heels. Unable to catch the ball, or check his own rush, Jimmy, quick as a flash, bounced it with one hand at Les Moore, coming back in on the floor under the basket, and Les flipped it up at the backboard. Luckily, amid a terrific roar from the Lockerbie crowd, it circled the hoop and rolled down through the netting. Twenty-three to twenty-two!

Running back to position, Jimmy saw Hillgate's center speaking to the timekeeper, who held up one finger. Jimmy called for time out.

"Boys all in, now," sneered Armstrong.

"Hey, fellows," called Jimmy, motioning to the scrubs. "Only one minute to play. I asked the score. Twenty-three to twenty-two against us. Hillgate will stall. Center will tip backward, and they'll hold the ball."

"What'll we do?" demanded Moore.

"You and Thurston and Wilson all run for the Hillgate basket when the ref throws up the ball," ordered Jimmy. "Waite and I will fight for that ball. If we get it, we'll pass. Let's go."

"Thatta boy," yelled Les Moore.

Up went the ball, and down the floor raced the three scrubs, Jimmy, eyes on the ball. Hillgate's center flipped it backward, and Jimmy dodged around him and down the floor after it. Waite charged upon the Hill-

gate floor guard, set to receive the pass, and got one hand on the ball firmly enough to shove it in Jimmy's direction. Jimmy snatched the ball, stopped short, looked at the basket and saw that he had a free shot. Then, quickly bluffing a shot, slipped the ball to Waite.

"Shoot, shoot, shoot," screamed the Lockerbie rooters, knowing time was short. But Waite remembered the scrub strategy. He bounced the ball past the Hillgate center, into Jimmy's hands as Jimmy dodged behind the floor guard.

"Shoot, shoot, Jimmy," screamed the Lockerbie crowd.

But Jimmy, too, remembered. He again bluffed a toss, the back guard jumped out at him, and then Jimmy merely handed the ball to Moore, under the basket. Surrounded by four fellow-scrubs for momentary protection, Les looped the ball through the ring. Twenty-four to twenty-three, for the scrubs!

Lockerbie Hall went wild and celebrated that night, as it had never celebrated before. Captain Armstrong and his old first team slunk out of the gym, ashamed, after the crowd had rushed upon the campus to start a bonfire.

"There's no harm in my joining the boys, is there?" Lieutenant Coleman asked.

"No more than in my joining you there," Colonel Wagner laughed. "I've got to see those boys. What a battle they put up!"

Together they made their way to the dressing-room, and found five tired, winded, leg-weary but happy scrubs stretched on the floor, utterly relaxed.

"Here, you boys, get up and get some blankets, if you are not going to the showers," commanded Lieutenant Coleman briskly.

"Too tired to stand up," laughed Jimmy Byers, as they scrambled up wearily.

"Boys, I'm proud of you," Colonel Wagner exclaimed, grasping their hands in turn. "You've taught me what the word fight means."

"And taught Hillgate some basketball," added Lieutenant Coleman.

"Basketball? It's nothing," snapped Colonel Wagner. "Nothing, to what they've taught Lockerbie, Lieutenant."

"How's that, sir?" asked the Lieutenant. "Discipline and training?"

"Yes, and more,—that when you can't fight another step, the thing to do is to go on, fighting harder than before."

CHAPTER II

THE SECOND STEP

"YELLOW, I said," jeered Billy Armstrong. He stood with two cronies on the sidewalk leading to Colonel Wagner's home and the Hall office. He spoke to Jimmy Byers, who approached with his chum, Les Moore.

"I heard you," Jimmy replied, "the first time."

"What are you going to do about it?" Billy demanded.

"Nothing," said Jimmy simply. Les Moore, somewhat taller and stockier than Jimmy, wheeled, and stood at his shoulder. "I don't believe it. Neither does Les, here. I should worry what you think." And he turned about to start up the steps.

"Yellow, when you ducked playing center against me, and let Moore play me," called Armstrong. "And yellower still, for letting me call you on it."

If he hoped to taunt Byers into a fist fight, he was disappointed. Jimmy and Les crossed the porch and knocked at the door without paying any further attention. And then, when Billy and his friends saw the gray-haired Colonel Wagner open the door for Jimmy and Les, the three likewise went up the steps and were admitted to the house.

Lieutenant Coleman, basketball coach, joined them, closely followed by others of the basketball squad. Colonel Wagner led them into his study and, seating himself behind his desk, motioned them to sit down. The Lieutenant sat in the center of the room, facing the Colonel. At his right, four of the boys grouped

around Jimmy Byers. At his left, the other four surrounded Billy Armstrong.

"Boys, here we are again," said Colonel Wagner, looking about him. "We met when Captain Armstrong and his first team refused to play for Lieutenant Coleman, after being disciplined for failure to train. The second team volunteered to play Hillgate, and won the game, without the coach. Is that correct?"

The boys ducked their heads, but Lieutenant Coleman said, "Yes, sir."

"Then, we agreed to let the old first team and the second team play a game to decide who should play the final game for Lockerbie, against Norwood School, for the intermountain championship," resumed the Colonel. "After that game, Lieutenant Coleman was to choose the team. Has the game been played, Lieutenant?"

"We had the game this afternoon, sir," said Lieutenant Coleman. "The old second team, Byers' team, won from Armstrong's old first team, by twenty-one to nineteen."

"Then you want the Byers team to play——" began the Colonel.

"No, sir, if you please," interrupted Lieutenant Coleman. "Nor do I think the Armstrong five should play. In my opinion the best thing for Lockerbie is to mix the two teams, provided every man on the squad will train and practise. I want every man of the ten who played this afternoon, to stay out for practise."

"If they promise, you name the team?" queried Colonel Wagner.

"Yes, sir."

"Boys, you have heard the Lieutenant's plan," said Colonel Wagner. "You will remember that I have refused to punish mutiny in the basketball squad. I have let you work out your own problems. Now then,

I am going to ask if you accept the coach's suggestion. Does it suit you, Byers?"

"Yes, sir," returned Jimmy promptly.

"And you, Armstrong?"

Billy Armstrong ducked his head, and muttered something about choosing the team right away.

"Does it suit you?" snapped the Colonel.

"Uh, yes, sir," Armstrong said.

"Very well," said Colonel Wagner. "Now then, I am going to ask Lieutenant Coleman to name the team he thinks will be able to represent Lockerbie against Norwood. But I wish to say one word more,—this is the end of student strikes against coaching authority. I have let you work out this problem, in your own way, and I congratulate you on the solution. But hereafter, any player refusing to accept orders from the coach will be suspended from all future athletic competition at Lockerbie."

Colonel Wagner swept the room with a stern gaze, letting his eyes rest perhaps a little longer on Billy Armstrong and his cohorts than elsewhere. Billy and his friends shifted uneasily. When the Colonel looked away from them, Billy glanced furtively at Byers, with menace in his expression. Clearly, he seemed to hold Jimmy responsible for his own fall from grace. Jimmy, who had followed the Colonel's gaze at Billy's group, gave no sign that he recognized ill will in Billy's glance.

"Lieutenant, you might outline your plans," suggested the Colonel.

Instantly the attention of all the boys in the two groups focused on Lieutenant Coleman. However strongly they felt over the rift in the squad, all of them were keen to make the team for the Norwood game. The trial game had been close, and some of the old firsts had played exceptionally well.

"It is a problem, sir," said Coleman, rising. "I have to consider individual play, team-play and the style of play needed to beat Norwood. Picking individuals, I should have to use some of the old first team. From the standpoint of team-play, I should have to use all the old scrubs. But thinking of Norwood, I should mix the two teams."

Billy Armstrong, who had played a strong game in the afternoon, shot a look of anticipated triumph at Byers.

"The best team for Lockerbie to use against Norwood," the Lieutenant resumed, "consists of Byers and Thurston, of the old scrubs, forwards; Russ Collins, of the old first team, back guard, and John Waite as floor guard, with Les Moore, jumping center and then changing positions with Waite. This team would play the same five-man defense and four-man attack that the scrubs used against Hillgate to win."

"Very well," said Colonel Wagner, "there is your program, boys. Let's all work hard, and do the best we can for Lockerbie. Is there anything else?"

"It might be in order to elect a captain, sir," said Lieutenant Coleman.

"But, Colonel Wagner," protested Jimmy, "Billy Armstrong was elected captain for this season."

"But he left the team," the Colonel replied, pleased with Jimmy's generous attitude. "However, that is for you boys to decide. What do you wish to do?"

"If you please, sir," a thin voice piped up, "I should like to nominate Jimmy Byers for captain for this game." It was Tommy Wilson, a thin little chap who played valiantly with the scrubs against Hillgate.

"And I second the motion," said Russ Collins. Collins stood almost as tall as Armstrong, and appeared to be more strongly built. He had played back guard on the first team, refused to strike with Armstrong,

and had left the team only when Lieutenant Coleman suspended his four mates.

"Any other nominations?" asked the Colonel. He was thinking how a crisis brings out character, and musing on the generosity of Jimmy Byers, the loyalty of Tommy Wilson to Byers, and the courage of Collins in forswearing his wayward mates of the old first team. "No other nominations? Those in favor of Wilson's nomination of Byers, please stand."

Les Moore, John Waite, Wilson, Collins and Thurston rose. Jimmy, of course, refused to vote for himself. Armstrong and his three cronies likewise remained seated.

"Those opposed, please rise," commanded the Colonel. But none of the boys stood up. "Then Byers is elected captain for this game," he announced.

Billy Armstrong and his three chums left the house first. When Jimmy and Les Moore, inseparable pals, left the porch and started down the walk, they came upon Billy and Russ Collins, with others standing about. Billy was upbraiding Collins for what he called desertion, and trying to start a quarrel. Collins refused to wrangle, but said he thought it his job to stick by the basketball team.

"If Coach wants me to play, I'll be in there doing my best, from now on," said Russ. "I'm through with trying to run the coach's job for him."

"Except helpin' him name the guy he wants for captain," sneered Armstrong.

"Looked to me like five of us wanted Byers. And I think he's the best man. Fighting little fool——"

"Fight? Rats," exclaimed Armstrong. "Yellow, all through, I tell yuh."

As he said this, Jimmy and Les Moore came within earshot. Jimmy was for passing the group, but Les halted abruptly.

"Listen, Armstrong," said Les sharply, "that will be about enough of that 'yellow' stuff, understand?"

"Not only yelluh, but he's got a rotten grudge against me," rejoined Billy Armstrong stubbornly. "Afraid to play me, this afternoon, so he moves *you* to center. And that beats me out of a job, and saves his for him, at forward."

"Reason I did that, Billy," protested Jimmy mildly, "was to find the best center to use against Norwood."

"Yaaaaa, *bunk*," Billy exclaimed. "Yelluh, all through. Ow-w-w, let go my shoulder. Where'd *you* get in on this?"

Les Moore had gripped him by the shoulder with one hand and held up a threatening fist.

"I get in right here, with both feet and both fists," said Les.

"Come on, Les," urged Jimmy. "I don't mind what he says, and you needn't."

"But he can't jump you, and get away with it when I'm around," protested the valiant Les.

"He hasn't jumped me yet," Jimmy laughed. "He's only talking. If he jumps on me, I'll look after myself."

"Yeah," growled Billy derisively, since Jimmy had pulled Les away from him.

"Boys," exclaimed a heavier voice, "what is the trouble?" They all turned about to see Lieutenant Coleman striding down the walk from Colonel Wagner's house. It was Jimmy who, after a long pause, replied.

"Some of us were arguing, sir, about the game," said Jimmy.

"If it is nothing more than that, all right," said Lieutenant Coleman. "But I want you boys to agree to drop all your differences, if you have any, until after this Norwood game. Let's all pull together to win it.

After that, you can settle your arguments. Now then, skip to bed. We've only four days to work out."

There followed three grilling practise sessions, with bitter and hard-fought scrimmages between Jimmy's newly organized varsity five, and Billy Armstrong's team of seconds. Each day the struggle was longer, until, at the end of the third, both teams were worn out and on the ragged edge of nervous exhaustion. Jimmy's crew, all of them training faithfully, held up far better than the easy-going Armstrong five, only one of whose number, little Wilson, kept up the fight without relaxing.

Billy Armstrong, driven by vanity to play harder than his poorly trained condition would warrant, became each day more irritable. He nagged Jimmy, on and off the floor, whenever he could without attracting the attention of Lieutenant Coleman. Time after time he flung the ugly word "yellow" at Jimmy, but young Byers merely smiled grimly and ignored the epithet.

The last day's practise was an easy drill on basket shooting, and signals for the four-man attack, and five-man defense system, polished up by Lieutenant Coleman from the description undertaken by Jimmy for the Hillgate struggle. The boys worked the floor tirelessly, played short passes only, and absolutely refused to look at the basket for a long shot.

"This game," pronounced the coach, "will win for us, if you all go in there to play your hardest, to fight until you're carried off the floor. Collins helps the defense because he's so big he can get the ball off the backboard, and keep Norwood from getting many shots. With Moore helping, we should keep Norwood out on the middle of the floor. No follow-in shots against us, to-morrow night. On the other hand, all our shots must be close up. Keep passing until the ball is down under the Norwood basket."

All Lockerbie was a-thrill over the Norwood game, because victory meant the intermountain championship. No Lockerbie team in five years had won the honor. Norwood stood at the head of the six schools comprising the league, with Lockerbie and Hillgate tied for second place. By winning, Lockerbie could take the lead and relegate Norwood to the same tie with Hillgate.

But every Lockerbie boy expected a tremendous battle, because Lockerbie lost to Norwood by two points in an overtime game earlier in the season. Norwood knew the style of play used by Armstrong's old five, and was confident of winning.

"But they can't beat us," Les Moore protested to Jimmy, as they left their room for the gymnasium. "We'll outfight them, and outstay them."

"The difference between them and us," agreed Jimmy seriously, "is the difference between Billy Armstrong's bunch and our team. They are better players, and so are Billy's. So they don't fight as hard as we must to make up the gap."

With the gymnasium packed until the very windows seemed to bulge, Lockerbie saw an epoch-marking game that night, with little Jimmy Byers and lanky Billy Armstrong in the thick of it. More unprecedented things happened,—but then that is the story of the game.

Led by the wiry tireless Jimmy, Lockerbie shot into a runaway lead at the start of the struggle. Norwood, a team of bigger, stronger boys, stood amazed at the undreamed-of style of attack offered by Jimmy, Les Moore, Thurston and John Waite. These four, once one of them obtained the ball, charged down the floor as if harnessed together, flipping the ball back and forth among themselves until close under the basket. Whereupon one of them shot. If he missed, another

pounced on the ball as it came down, and tossed it up again. The Norwood back guard charged blindly first at one and then at another. He called the floor guard back to his aid, but the floor guard was just as completely bewildered.

Before the first half was two-thirds gone, the score stood thirteen to four, for Lockerbie. The crowd, packed in like scraps of leather in a nickel baseball, exulted. Here came the title! But then disaster befell. Les Moore, in a scrimmage after the tip-off at center, tripped over his opponent's foot, and fell crashing to the floor on his right shoulder. Gamely he tried to continue play, but the pain in his right arm and extreme soreness in the shoulder muscles forced him out.

"All right, Billy, let's go," said Jimmy Byers, when Coach Coleman sent in Armstrong to substitute for the stalwart Les. "Up and down the floor, short passes, short shots."

No change was apparent in Lockerbie's game for a few plays, and then Billy, anxious for a chance to redeem himself and disdainful of the new style of basketball, emerged from an encounter with the Norwood floor guard, in possession of the ball. He dribbled a step, straightened up outside the foul line, and shot for the basket. And made it! The crowd applauded, and the score stood fifteen to four, for Lockerbie.

"Good shot, Billy," exclaimed Jimmy, as Billy trotted to the center for another tip-off. "But Thurston and Waite were right under the goal. Why not pass?"

Armstrong did not reply, but gave his attention to the ball. Up it went, Billy batted it down the floor. In another minute, visions of stardom before his eyes, Armstrong again snatched the ball out of a mix-up, and once more essayed a long shot. This time he

missed, and there was no Lockerbie man near the basket to recover the ball. Norwood worked down the floor, and scored. Fifteen to six.

"Short passes, short shots, Billy," Jimmy again urged Armstrong.

Then a third time Armstrong disregarded orders, with the same result. Norwood, from an out-of-bounds formation, took the ball down the floor and shot over Russ Collins' head for another basket. Score, fifteen to eight.

"Time out," called Jimmy, as the ball came down through the loop. A determined expression on his face, he called his Lockerbie boys around him. "Fellows, we're playing short passes and short shots. Billy, don't mix 'em up. Cut the long shots."

"You play *your* game, and I'll play mine," retorted Armstrong.

"They don't work together," said Jimmy. "The next time you break up our attack, out you go."

"Try to put me out," jibed Billy, looking away.

The whistle blew. Jimmy, worried over the new turn in affairs, hardly knew what to do. He realized that if he benched Billy, Armstrong's friends would accuse him of jealousy. On the other hand, if Billy stayed in, he could easily demoralize Lockerbie's game and lose the contest to Norwood. Pondering his problem, Jimmy ran about the floor as if in a daze. Thurston and John Waite sought to team with Armstrong, but Billy ignored them, trying to play the game single-handed. Presently he recovered a fumbled pass from Norwood and setting himself, shot for the goal from near the center of the floor.

Instantly, Jimmy decided on action. Instead of sending Billy out of the game, he put it up to Armstrong. Calling for time out, he walked up to Billy with blazing eyes.

"Will you get out, or shall I?" he demanded.

"You know which one of us I think is yellow," retorted Armstrong boldly. "Go ahead and quit."

"All right," snapped Jimmy. "I'll bench myself, Waite and Thurston. You can have your old team, and your old style of play. We give you a fifteen to eight lead."

Jimmy, his head up, called Waite and Thurston after him, and walking up to Lieutenant Coleman, on the bench, asked him to send in White, Wilcox and Hubbard, Armstrong's three cronies. The coach, appraising the situation quickly, did so.

"Saving his team," said the rooters, misunderstanding.

"Now you've played hob," growled Les Moore, on the side-lines. "What'd you do *that* for?"

"It's all right," said Lieutenant Coleman, willing to gamble that Jimmy had the right answer for mutiny. "We'll work it out."

But the words were hardly out of his mouth when the game seemed to collapse. Billy Armstrong and his old team, except Russ Collins, seemed stupefied by the sudden change in affairs, with the result that in the four minutes left to play, Norwood scored three times from the field. When the pistol-shot ended the period, the score stood Lockerbie fifteen, Norwood fourteen. And Lockerbie rooters sat stunned. A runaway victory had been turned into threatened defeat, and Norwood, regaining confidence, was coming strong.

"Make 'em start the second half, and tell 'em they've got to hold that lead," whispered Jimmy to Lieutenant Coleman. During intermission, the coach spoke sharply to Armstrong and his mates, and urged them to a harder fight.

When the game was resumed, Lockerbie rooters gave the team a cheer, and hoped for a spurt. Arm-

strong and his chums, frantic to make good, started with a burst of speed, and scored early, Billy himself shooting a long basket. But other long shots failed to connect, and Norwood rallied. Studying the old Lockerbie game as played by Armstrong's five, Norwood surged forward relentlessly, breaking up pass after pass, and taking shots for the goal more and more frequently. In a few minutes the score stood eighteen to seventeen in Norwood's favor, Lockerbie trailing for the first time.

Raging, Billy Armstrong blindly fouled a Norwood forward, holding and tripping at the same time. Norwood made good one of the two free throws.

"Let us go in, Coach, please," begged Jimmy Byers, desperate. He had intended to let Billy's crew take their medicine. "Give me Waite and Thurston and Wilson, and let Collins stay in."

"Out you go," ordered Lieutenant Coleman. Jimmy yelled for time out, and led his old scrubs out on the floor.

"Everybody out but Collins," said Jimmy, to the dejected Armstrong. "We're gonna play short passes, short shots. Everybody all over the floor."

The last sentence describes the most beautiful rally ever staged on the Lockerbie floor. Jimmy, John Waite, Thurston and Tommy Wilson literally swarmed all over the playing space, hiving where the ball was, taking it in their midst, flying goalward with it, time after time. Shots were missed, passes were dropped, but always the little fellows, outmatched for height and weight, were fighting for the ball. Presently they scored, John Waite flipping in a basket under the boards. Tied. But Norwood fought back, and connected for a long shot, resuming a two-point lead.

Losing the tip-off to the tall Norwood center, who towered high over Jimmy's figure, Lockerbie fought

for the leather as tropical boys scramble for coins in the water. More often than not, they got their hands on the ball. When they did, the ball traveled goalward. Came a Lockerbie basket, and Lockerbie tied. Another, and then a Norwood rally for a score. But the harder Norwood rallied, the more grimly, the more frenziedly Lockerbie attacked, until, three minutes before the final gun, Norwood cracked under the strain. Three baskets in a row, two by little Jimmy Byers himself, running hither and thither over the floor like a water spider over a pool, put the game on ice. Score, Lockerbie twenty-seven, Norwood twenty-three.

Norwood players, exhausted from the effort to keep up with the tireless, fighting, Lockerbie five, sank to the floor worn out. Jimmy and his team ran off the floor to escape the rush of rooters celebrating the victory. Safe in the dressing-room, the players rejoiced at the hard-won battle. Jimmy laughed and sang with the rest, until he noticed Billy Armstrong's sullen attitude.

"Yelluh, and a grand-stander to boot," snarled Billy, as Jimmy looked at him.

Lieutenant Coleman, busy with the task of binding Les Moore's shoulder, was in the next room.

"I don't believe a word of it," laughed Jimmy. "Forget it, Billy, and let's be friends. I've nothing against you."

"But I've got those two things against *you*," growled Billy Armstrong. "And you haven't got the nerve, or you'd fight me."

"Who says I won't fight you?" demanded Jimmy Byers sharply. "Basketball's over. I'll fight you, on either of two conditions."

Jimmy had approached Billy, and Armstrong rose from the chair on which he had been sitting to untie his shoe-laces. The boys gathered around them.

"I'll beat your head off on any conditions you like," said Billy.

"All right. Either you get into as good condition as I am in, or I'll try to get myself into as poor condition as you are in," Jimmy replied, flushing. "That will make it even. You weren't in shape to fight for Lockerbie, and you're not in shape to fight for yourself."

"I'm in good enough shape—why——" and Billy Armstrong suddenly launched a wild swing at Jimmy's nose. But John Waite and Tommy Wilson pounced upon him.

"What's the row, boys?" demanded Lieutenant Coleman, from the doorway.

The basketball squad, horrified at being caught in a brawl, heard him with dismay. Lockerbie discipline punished fighting. Armstrong ducked his head. Jimmy Byers spoke up.

"Armstrong and I are going to fight, sir," said Jimmy. "He says I'm yellow, and wants to prove it. Soon as he's in shape to fight——"

"Ten days from now, in the gym, with boxing-gloves," announced Lieutenant Coleman crisply. The boys stared in surprise. Such procedure was new to them, and to Lockerbie. They did not know how keenly the Lieutenant understood the situation. "But, Armstrong, colors are funny. What looks yellow to you, may seem a brave red to another, or a true blue to somebody else. Colors depend on the glasses through which you see them. Come on, boys," he broke off briskly. "Out of your togs, and into the showers."

We now approach with Jimmy the third step of his long upward climb.

CHAPTER III

STEP THREE

"MR. WILLIAM J. ARMSTRONG,
President, Universal Metal Corporation,
New York City.

"Dear Mr. Armstrong:

"This is to explain my letter, to which you reply by saying that you are too busy to run up to Lockerbie Hall to see how Billy is getting along. You ask why I think you might wish to come.

"Billy faces a crisis in his boyhood career. It will, I believe, result in his becoming a straightforward fighting man, or a cowardly slacker type. You are as much interested in the alternative as any of us.

"A few weeks ago Billy was captain of the basketball team, a clever resourceful player, perhaps the best in school. But he and three other boys rebelled against training, and the coach disciplined him. The boys thereupon struck. I called them all in, and put it up to them to solve their own problem.

"One of the substitutes, a small chap named Byers, suggested that the scrub team play the next game. By doing so, he said, the scrubs would prove that training is necessary. We accepted the suggestion, the scrubs played and won from a team that had beaten Billy's first team. Then the scrubs and the old varsity played to determine who would represent Lockerbie in the last, and hardest, game of the schedule. That, too, was suggested by Byers. The game was played, and the coach chose a new team, including Byers and omitting Billy.

"But in the final game, one player was hurt, and Billy was substituted. He upset team-play by undertaking a personal game. Byers, as captain, warned him, pleaded with him to play the team's game, but

finally had to order Billy off the floor, substituting a smaller player who would fit into team-play. Then Lockerbie nosed out a victory.

"Billy, who had sought to hold Byers responsible for his predicament, tried to pick a fight with the other boy, who is smaller. Byers would not fight, saying Billy was not in shape to fight, because he was not even in shape to play basketball. Finally, however, he agreed to fight when Billy was ready.

"The basketball coach, who teaches boxing, has arranged for them to put on boxing-gloves Thursday evening as part of the boxing-class exhibition. Billy is getting ready for the match. For the moment he has stopped sulking and complaining. In my opinion, this boxing-match will be an important test for him, and I sincerely hope you can come. If you do, please get in touch with me, rather than with Billy."

"That," said Colonel Wagner, leaning back as he finished reading the letter to Lieutenant Coleman, "is the letter. If it does not bring him, nothing will."

"I think you were wise to speak so frankly," commented Lieutenant Coleman. "Mr. Armstrong must be a very busy man, with all his affairs to manage, but——"

"No reason why he should abandon his boy to us, and take it for granted we will make a man of him," Colonel Wagner interrupted. "Parents that turn their children over to schools and go on about their business, make me sick. And if Mr. Armstrong comes, I'm liable to tell him as much. Although," as he picked up his pen to sign the letter, "I have not left much unsaid here."

"It is a good letter, and my guess is that Mr. Armstrong will be here," said Lieutenant Coleman. "Too bad that Jimmy's father can not be here, too."

"Jimmy does not need his dad, even if the Major could get away from the Philippines," Colonel Wagner replied. "That boy stands on his own feet."

Had Colonel Wagner and Lieutenant Coleman known what was going on at the moment, they might have wondered at their confidence in Jimmy. And if Jimmy Byers, panting and struggling in his room, had known the Colonel and the Lieutenant were using him to teach a lesson, he would have been horrified. Jimmy had no idea of being a model young man.

"Why don't you stand up and stop me?" he demanded, puffing. As he spoke he advanced doggedly against his chum, Les Moore, swinging both fists as if he would cave in the bigger boy's ribs. Les, blocking as best he could and occasionally shoving at Jimmy, was hard put to sidestep and dodge. There is not much space for footwork in a dormitory room, after the bed, the dresser, the study table, two chairs and two trunks have been placed.

"Oh, drop it," retorted Les. Lunging at Jimmy, he swung an arm about Jimmy's neck, and dropped his weight on Jimmy's shoulders. Both crashed to the floor, and Les followed his advantage by sitting on Jimmy's head. "Now then, are you through?"

"Till I get up, I am," panted Jimmy.

"Then you can't get up," growled Les, driving one knee into Jimmy's biceps to hold him down. Pinching Jimmy in the ribs, he asked again, "Are you through?"

"Ow, stop it,—yes, I'm through," said Jimmy.

A moment later, stretched out side by side on the bed, both panting for breath and sweating from their exertion, they resumed their argument about Jimmy's pending fight with Billy.

"I tell you, you should have let me step in and crack him one," declared Les. "I'd shut him up in a hurry. But s'pose he licks you, then what?"

"Well, he hasn't licked me yet, and——"

"But he's as big as I am, and what did I just do to you?" Les demanded.

"You turned a boxing-match into wrestling, that's what you did," retorted Jimmy, aiming a kick at Moore's leg. "You couldn't stop me any other way."

"Not without knocking your block off, as Billy Armstrong is liable to do."

"He'll have to knock it off more'n once before I'm licked," Jimmy said. "Is he training?"

"I saw him running, and one of the fellows said he is boxing at the gym," said Les. "But say, what's he sore at *you* about? You didn't do anything, except ask Coach to put him out of the game. And he had that coming to him."

"I haven't done anything," Jimmy replied, sitting up on the edge of the bed, "except this, I sort of got in his way. You see, Les, Billy's always had things pretty soft. When basketball got tough for him, it peeved him. He could play a pretty good game without half trying, but the whole trying was too much trouble. So we had all that row about training. He thinks I've got it in for him, but I haven't although I'm going to fight him to satisfy him."

"Yeah, and if you don't lick the yellow pup, I'll clean up on you," growled Les, rising from the bed and standing up to stretch.

"I don't think he's yellow," said Jimmy. "He's just never had to fight for anything, that's all. Don't know what it means."

"Aw, rats, you'd argue all night to find something good about a rattlesnake," scowled Les. "I'm going to bed. You gonna stay up and study any longer?"

"Work's all done. I'll turn in, too."

Next morning, about six o'clock, Jimmy woke and rolled out of bed, being careful not to disturb his bunkmate. He hurriedly dressed in old rough clothing, and was about to leave the room when Les awoke.

"Wait a minute, and I'll go along," said Les, jump-

ing up. A few minutes later, each wearing a sweater instead of a coat, they were out of the dormitory and off along the road on a trot.

"Makes you feel good to do this before breakfast," said Les.

"Yep," Jimmy replied, striding briskly. "A mile of it is great stuff."

Around a turn in the road they went and, much to their surprise, encountered Billy Armstrong. Billy, who evidently had been running, had just stopped and was walking off the roadway to sit down upon a rock. He was breathing hard. Les and Jimmy paused.

"Anything wrong?" asked Jimmy civilly enough.

"Nope," panted Billy. "Stopped to get my breath."

"Must have gone at it too hard," suggested Jimmy.

"Yeah, a trot's all you want—no sprints," added Les Moore.

"All I want is no advice from you guys," muttered Billy.

"You're a friendly piece of cheese," growled Les. "Somebody does you a good turn, and you kick 'em in the shins."

"I haven't noticed you or your dog there doing me any favors—nothing but dirt," Billy retorted.

"If you think either one of us has gone out of our way to bother with you, I'm just as guilty as Jimmy," said Les Moore, his anger rising. "Why didn't you pick on me, instead of him? I'm your size."

"When I get through with him, you won't want any part of me," declared Billy sulkily. "And besides, he's the one I'm going to be even with."

"That's fair enough," said Jimmy. "All of us ought to be even, all the time. C'mon, Les, we'll get cold standing around here."

"Too slow to catch cold," Billy grinned, as Jimmy grabbed Les by the arm and jerked him along into a

brisk trot once more. Billy stood and watched them down the road, Jimmy's shorter stride bobbing him along the road in such manner as to make him look like a little boy running with his father. The taller sturdier Les Moore, leaning toward Jimmy as he ran so that he could hear something Jimmy said, seemed to have a protecting fatherly attitude toward the smaller chap.

Billy Armstrong, after watching them disappear around another curve in the road, resumed his own way toward the dormitory up among the cedar trees on the hill. He went at a steady shuffling jog. There was not in his step the zest that marked the stride of Jimmy Byers.

To do him justice, it should be said that Billy Armstrong had a great deal of ability. He was tall and strongly built, although slender, and he possessed a natural knack for athletics. In his classes he stood out as an intelligent youngster, although courses that required hard digging did not appeal to him. In short, he fitted almost exactly the description given to him by Jimmy Byers. Endowed with natural talents, and supplied by indulgent parents with all the advantages it is possible to give a youngster, Billy had never acquired the habit of trying in games, classes or social contact.

Jimmy, on the other hand, seemed to have been taught early that he could have in life only those things that he could go out and get for himself. Always alert, always trying, the boy had neither an idle brain cell nor an idle muscle. Determination seemed to be his strongest characteristic. This attitude he owed to the teachings of his father, a major of infantry who, since Jimmy had come of school age, saw the lad only a few weeks every two years. Major Byers, out of his salary, was able to send Jimmy to Lockerbie. He had

no home establishment to maintain, because Jimmy's mother died when the boy was still a baby. A stronger or more marked contrast between two boys in the same preparatory school could hardly have been found.

Les Moore, Jimmy's pal, seemed to be something of a compromise between the two. His people, not so wealthy as the Armstrong family, were comfortably circumstanced, so that Les lacked nothing in the way of solid advantages. Les, while a sincere and earnest student, lacked the determined drive with which Jimmy applied himself. But on the other hand, he had no leaning toward the easy-going manner of Billy Armstrong. In short, he was not spoiled, as Billy had been spoiled.

All three of the boys were in their last year at Lockerbie, preparing for courses in college. Billy's goal, selected for him by doting parents, was a fashionable eastern college. Les was headed for a big middle-western university, and little Jimmy Byers dreamed of an opportunity to enter West Point. Colonel Wagner, for years a close friend of Major Byers, stood ready to help with that program. He saw Jimmy in the making as a great soldier.

That, in a nutshell, accounts for the Colonel's confidence in the outcome of the boxing-match arranged for Billy Armstrong and Jimmy. He had failed to mold Billy Armstrong into an aggressive, alert Lockerbie type because home influences and soft upbringing were too strong for him. But he felt sure that Jimmy Byers, a hard-fighting little codger as the Colonel described him to Lieutenant Coleman, should help.

"But I wish," he said to Lieutenant Coleman Thursday at dinner-time, "that Mr. Armstrong could be here."

"No word from him?" queried the Lieutenant.

"No,—unless this long distance call is from him," Colonel Wagner replied. "He may be driving. Is everything ready for to-night?"

"Yes, sir," said Lieutenant Coleman.

"If Mr. Armstrong is coming, and will be with me, I shall get word to you," said Colonel Wagner. "I wish you would be sure the match between Byers and Billy is held off until we get into the gymnasium."

"Yes, sir," Lieutenant Coleman promised.

If any one had doubted the manliness of Lockerbie's boys, that doubt would have been dispelled by a sight of the crowd in the gymnasium that night. Lieutenant Coleman's boxing class numbered some forty boys, out of a total of more than two hundred enrolled. For the exhibition program, the Lieutenant had chosen twelve of the best boxers and matched them with a view to popularizing boxing as a sport. In other words, he arranged six even contests. All the members of his class and every other boy and every instructor in school were present when the program started.

Lieutenant Coleman acted as referee, but, in accordance with amateur boxing rules, named two judges for each bout, these judges giving the decision. Boys from the boxing class served as judges, also as scorers and timers. In short, the boys played all the parts, except referee. Jimmy Byers, for example, appeared once as a judge, another time as a towel-swinger or second, and on a third occasion as timer. Billy Armstrong seconded two of his friends in their matches, and acted as judge for one match. Billy seemed somewhat nervous, but carried a defiant air, while Jimmy acted as if he had nothing more exciting scheduled for the evening than a game of checkers.

The Lieutenant, between rounds and between matches, kept an observant eye open for Colonel Wag-

ner. He saved the match between Billy and Jimmy Byers for the last number, and it was well he did, for only when the contestants in the fifth bout were ending their third and last round, did Colonel Wagner enter the hall. Lieutenant Coleman saw him come in with a middle-aged man. The man, undoubtedly, was Billy Armstrong's father.

"Are you sure the boys have not already boxed?" asked Mr. Armstrong. "I'm sorry to have been so late, but that puncture cost me an hour."

"I think they have not been out yet," replied Colonel Wagner. He turned to a boy standing near by and inquired, and then relayed the information. "No, they have not been out. They will be the last match."

"Well, this is quite a performance," said Mr. Armstrong, with enthusiasm. "Who is referee?"

"Lieutenant Coleman, the instructor," Colonel Wagner answered. "But he has two of the boys for judges, and other boys as timers, scorers and inspectors. In that way, the boys learn responsibility, as well as actual boxing."

"Fine, fine," exclaimed Mr. Armstrong. "Now then," as the fifth bout ended, "is that decision made up by boys out of the class?"

"Yes," said Colonel Wagner. "And we're just in time to see Billy and young Byers box."

"Billy does not know I am here?"

"I did not tell him you were coming."

"And this other boy, Byers,—who is he?" Mr. Armstrong asked.

"The son of a Major John Byers, of the infantry, stationed in the Philippines."

"But look," said Mr. Armstrong, as first Billy and then Jimmy Byers entered the ring, "Billy is much bigger than the other boy. I'd say two inches taller, and fifteen pounds heavier. That's not fair."

"They use big gloves," replied Colonel Wagner, "and can not hurt each other. The match is of their own making, and Byers will have to look out for himself."

"Can he do that against Billy?" asked Mr. Armstrong.

"I think so."

At this moment Lieutenant Coleman held up his hand for silence, and announced the last match, thereafter naming new officials. He called the boys to the center of the ring, and briefly reviewed the rules. Billy, looming above Jimmy and appearing to have every advantage in height, weight and reach, was nervous but affected a swaggering cock-sure manner. Jimmy, holding a sweater about him as best he could with the clumsy gloves, betrayed no anxiety.

"Remember, boys," warned Lieutenant Coleman, "that you must do what I say. Obey the rules, break away cleanly, and keep boxing. All right?"

"All right," said Jimmy, looking at the Lieutenant.

"Yellow," breathed Billy, nodding, but gazing at Jimmy.

The bell rang, and both boys came out of their corners, Jimmy in some caution, Billy Armstrong with a rush. Jimmy, in mid-ring, at once ducked his head, pulled his chin back against his chest, and covered as best he could with his gloves and elbows. Billy, swinging hard with both fists, waded in.

"C'mon, fight, yellow," he muttered. "This is no boxing-match."

And he proceeded to prove it was a fight, rather than a test of skill. Using his weight to good advantage, and driving heavily against Jimmy's guard, he drove Jimmy back against the ropes. Jimmy, unable to attack at such close range, without exposing himself to some of Billy's swings, maintained his defense.

"Fight, don't be a turtle," growled Billy.

Jimmy sidestepped along the ropes to get out of close quarters. As he did so, Billy swung a hard right and hit him on the shoulder. Jimmy slipped at the same instant, and went down on one knee. Billy hovered over him waiting an opening, but Lieutenant Coleman thrust him back toward the center of the ring. Muttering something about unfairness, Billy stood away. Instantly, Jimmy was on his feet and rushed, driving in with both hands. Billy stood his ground, thrust out a long hard left, and jabbed it into Jimmy's face, forcing his head back. He followed with a right to the chest that threw Jimmy toward the ropes. Once more Billy rushed forward, swinging wildly but viciously with both hands, and Jimmy again covered up as he fell against the ropes.

He refused to clinch, and Billy pummeled away at him without restraint, pounding a tattoo on his shoulders and gloves. Presently he tired, and paused to taunt Jimmy into open fighting. No sooner had he hesitated, however, than Jimmy dived at him, head down, and both fists swinging up from his waist. One caught Billy on the chin, and sent him backward off balance. Jimmy followed up. Again Billy had presence of mind to thrust out his long left arm, and the glove drove flush upon Jimmy's mouth. Jimmy swung a futile right at Billy's wind, but missed because the long jab turned him off balance. As they squared away, the bell rang, and the crowd applauded.

"Billy's too big and strong for the little fellow," said Mr. Armstrong to Colonel Wagner.

"Byers can take care of himself."

"He sure swings hard," breathed Jimmy to Les Moore, in his corner.

"Yeah. Cover, and let him swing," counseled Les.

"He'll wear out."

The second round was a repetition of the first, Billy forcing the fighting with impetuous rushes and wild swings. Jimmy covered carefully, avoided clinching but struck once to the wind, and once to the chin. Each attack infuriated Billy, who rushed harder and more wildly. During one session against the ropes, Jimmy again slipped down to one knee, but Lieutenant Coleman rightly refused to call it a knock-down and end the round.

"C'mon, fight, yellow," growled Billy, his breath growing shorter. "How can we fight if you stay covered up?"

He was rushing as he spoke, and Jimmy, standing up to him firmly, punctuated the question for him with a stiff right-hand jolt to Billy's wind. Billy grunted, and thrust out his left again. Jimmy blocked with his right, and swung his own left to Billy's stomach.

"Nice work, little fellow," muttered Mr. Armstrong. "But, Colonel, Billy's too big and strong for him."

"Wait, wait," was all the Colonel said.

"Go get him this time, Jimmy," urged Les Moore, at the end of the round.

"I'll have to," Jimmy replied, breathing steadily. "He's had the edge."

"Keep after him, all the time," said Les.

The bell rang, and this time it was Jimmy who rushed out of his corner, and Billy who advanced cautiously. Billy, tiring rapidly, threw up his guard, and set to meet an attack. Jimmy feinted at his jaw, and then swung hard at Billy's stomach. The blow landed, and Billy doubled up. As he did so, Jimmy hooked his left against Billy's jaw, and spun him half-way round. Instead of closing in, however, he waited for Billy to square away.

Billy, without waiting for breath or to take aim,

rushed. Jimmy jabbed with his left, thrusting Billy's head back and making Billy miss with both his left and his right. Then Jimmy landed a hard right in Billy's ribs, missing the wind. Billy covered up, his shoulders hunched down. Jimmy waited for him to straighten. Tired, now, Billy lashed out with a weary left, and Jimmy cuffed it aside with his own left, to smash his right once more against the bigger boy's ribs.

"This kind of fighting suit you?" demanded Jimmy, unable to restrain the desire to taunt his opponent.

Flaring into a renewed anger, Billy madly rushed once more, driving Jimmy back upon the ropes, but being wilder than ever, missed all his blows. Jimmy, against the ropes, leaned forward away from them, and suddenly drove straight at Billy, with rights and lefts in rapid succession against Billy's stomach. Doubled up to protect himself, both gloves dropping over his wind, Billy left his jaw uncovered, and, in a flash, Jimmy whipped his right hand to the chin.

Going backward at the instant, and because the blow was as much shove as impact, Billy lost his balance and sat down. Bewildered, he looked about him, while Lieutenant Coleman motioned Jimmy back. Jimmy, watching Billy closely, withdrew.

"Here's the test," whispered Colonel Wagner to Mr. Armstrong.

"He's not hurt,—tell him to get up," growled Mr. Armstrong.

As they spoke, Billy's glance met Jimmy's. Jimmy smiled slightly, and that smile brought Billy to his feet. He drove uncertainly at Jimmy again, rushing and flailing with both hands. Jimmy set himself quickly, drew back his right hand while blocking with the left, and crashed the right against Billy's face. Shaking his head, but disdaining to quit even though his breath came in gasps and every muscle ached,

Billy bore in harder than ever. Jimmy jabbed twice with his left and each time shook up the bigger boy, but still Billy drove in, though groggy.

Then the bell. Immediately a roar of applause went up. Jimmy, tired, but in no distress, thrust out a hand.

"Good going, Billy," he said, grinning.

Billy, his jaw dropping, only stared at him. And then Billy offered his own hand, shook Jimmy's glove weakly, and turned to stumble to his stool. The judges offered up their scores, and the announcer gave their verdict for Jimmy.

"By George, they were right, too," said Mr. Armstrong. "My boy edged him the first two rounds, but Byers had the third by a mile. But where was the crisis you were talking about?"

"In the last round, where Billy had to decide whether to get up or to quit," said Colonel Wagner. "That's the first test Billy's been up against, since he came here two years ago, that he has met. Every other time, he has quit or sulked. I'm sorry to have to say that, but I'm proud he came through. And glad he's learned our lesson."

"What's that?"

"When you can't go another step, is the time to begin fighting."

"By George, that's fine," exclaimed Mr. Armstrong enthusiastically. "I'm glad I came. And this boxing is great stuff. The kids ought to thrive on it, for boys will be boys."

"Yes, but our job is to see that boys will be men," laughed Colonel Wagner. "And your boy's made. Let's go around to the dressing-room and see him."

"All right. But say, that little chap is a nervy rascal."

"Like for you to meet him."

They found a swarm of boys in the dressing-room. Jimmy and Billy, sitting side by side, were leading an excited discussion.

"We've got to get ready for the hockey game with Norwood," said Jimmy. "They've got a strong team, and——"

"I'll kill any of our guys 'at don't train hard, see?" exclaimed Billy. And then laughed sheepishly, remembering his own previous attitude toward training. Thereupon, Jimmy Byers shoved him off the bench on which they had both been sitting, and the whole group fell on Billy to roll him on the floor.

"If boys will be men," chuckled the Colonel to Mr. Armstrong, as they both surveyed the scene from the doorway, "we should worry if they will be boys."

CHAPTER IV

ALL FOR ONE

"WHY, good evening, Jimmy," exclaimed Colonel Wagner, opening his front door a few days later and finding Byers there. "Won't you come in?"

"Thank you, sir," said Jimmy. He stepped in, and the Colonel closed the door.

"Take off your coat," urged Colonel Wagner, "and come in by the fire."

"I wanted to talk to you, if you're not too busy," Jimmy replied, slipping out of his heavy military coat.

"Sit down and warm yourself," suggested the Colonel, leading the way to the fireplace in his study. "What is on your mind?"

"Well, nothing very much," said Jimmy, sitting down in an easy chair before the blazing fire. "That is, it may not seem much of a problem to you, but it bothers me a lot. I talked to Lieutenant Coleman, and I'd like to get your advice."

"Glad to help you if I can," the Colonel said, lighting his pipe. "What is it?"

"Ice hockey and my work," said Jimmy. "I'm not playing hockey. The team has several good players, who can outskate me and know the game. I decided I wasn't needed, and then I got interested in some work——"

"Nothing wrong with your standing, is there?"

"No, sir, I'm getting along all right in my classes," Jimmy explained. "But I've been thinking about what I'm going to do when I get through this spring. I've

about decided I'll not try for West Point. Had a letter from Dad——"

"How is the Major?" queried the Colonel.

"He's been laid up in the hospital," said Jimmy, "though he does not say it is anything serious. He has always wanted me to go in for the army, but this letter discourages the idea. He doesn't say he wants me to try something else, but——" and Jimmy felt in his pockets. "I'm sorry I haven't got his letter. Anyway, I've decided to go in for business training. Looks to me like there's more of a future."

"I'm sorry if you have made up your mind against military training," the Colonel replied. "The Point offers a splendid general education——"

"But you see, Colonel Wagner," Jimmy interrupted, flushing as he did so, "it does not look square to accept an education unless you want to use it."

"That's right, of course," murmured the Colonel, behind his pipe. "Although I think you'd make a good officer, Jimmy. A good officer has a good future."

"I expect you're right," said Jimmy. "But then, I've decided I ought to get along better in some other line. So I've been sort of hanging around the library. I got hold of a book on railroad organization, written by a man at Harvard. He tells how several big railroad systems were organized, how they were built, the trouble they had getting started, and so forth. It's better than a novel. Gives me a new slant on the railroads, because out in the Northwest where I was raised lots of people think railroads are their enemies. Wicked corporations, and so on."

"Going in for railroading, Jimmy?"

"I don't know, but I might," Jimmy flushed. "Been sort of reading around, and I want to do some more of it, to get some ideas. But the boys are after me to play hockey."

"The team does not seem to be doing very well," commented the Colonel. "You might be able to help the boys out."

"That's what Les Moore says," said Jimmy. "But he's my bunkie and thinks I can do anything. Lieutenant Coleman asked me, too, as manager."

"I'm sorry we can not afford a regular hockey coach," said Colonel Wagner.

"He helps a lot, with the training and discipline," Jimmy hastened to explain. "I told him my troubles, and he said he could understand, and for me to do what I thought best. But Les Moore keeps riding me. Says I haven't any right to throw Lockerbie down, and that's what worries me."

"Oh, they know you wouldn't do that," said Colonel Wagner, leaning over to empty the ashes from his pipe. Just then there was a ring at the door, and the Colonel rose to answer it. At the same time Jimmy stood up.

"If you've got company coming——" he began.

"Stay right here," the Colonel replied over his shoulder as he crossed the room. And then Jimmy heard his voice from the hall. "Come right in, glad to see you. Friend of yours is already here."

Jimmy looked around, and was surprised to see his roommate, the husky Les Moore, preceding Colonel Wagner through the door. Les, finding Jimmy, was equally surprised.

"You said you were going to the library to read."

"I did," Jimmy retorted. "You said you would stay at home and study."

"I did," said Les defensively. "Fine way to out-smart each other, hey?"

"And both of you trying to put something over on me," laughed the Colonel. "Each of you wants advice to fit his own program,—is that it?"

"Sure," laughed Les. "Anyway, I do."

"Jimmy's been telling me the story," said Colonel Wagner. "As I get it, the hockey team is not doing very well. Sit down and let's talk it over. What's the trouble?"

"Well, we've got good material, but it won't jell," Les explained. "Billy Armstrong is a good skater, and a good handler of the puck. Collins is a whale of a goal-keeper, and John Waite plays a strong defense. But I don't know,—we pass all right, and team fine, but we don't crack through. Got one more game to play, with Norwood. Haven't won a game yet, and I'd certainly like to win one before we quit."

"What makes you think Jimmy can help that situation?" asked the Colonel, relighting his pipe. "He tells me he knows little about ice hockey."

"Not much of a skater, either," interposed Jimmy Byers.

"Well, maybe so," said Les. "But when Billy Armstrong and his bunch quit basketball, Jimmy pulled us out of the hole. And when Billy came back, who was it handled him? Jimmy. He put the punch in the team, and he had an idea that won."

"Is Armstrong behaving himself these days?" asked the Colonel. "Fitting into the team systems and everything?"

"Oh, sure," said Les, grinning. "Jimmy taught him his lesson. He doesn't try to play the whole game, any more. Used to want to star all the time."

"That's good. Now then, Jimmy," and the Colonel turned to the smaller of the two boys, "have you anything else to say for yourself?"

"No, sir, I guess not," said Jimmy.

"Then my mind's made up," said Colonel Wagner. "Jimmy, you should go out for the team. But before you do, I want you to give me a digest of that book on railroads you've been reading. Make it as long or

as short as you like, but give me a summary of it, and a criticism showing your feeling about the book. For your part, Moore," addressing himself to Les, "you agree to quit nagging Jimmy about ice hockey?"

"Yes, sir," Les agreed, "if Jimmy doesn't take too long. We've got to play Norwood in two weeks."

"I'll get busy," Jimmy promised. "I've finished reading the book, and it will not take me long to write what I have to say."

"All right, then, we'll call it a trade," said the Colonel. "I hope it works out to everybody's advantage." Colonel Wagner rose from his chair. "Jimmy, when you hear from your father again, let me know how he is."

Jimmy and Les walked home to their room through the snow and the cold wind, quarreling amicably as they went. But when Jimmy reminded Les that the Colonel's bargain stipulated there should be no more ragging about hockey, Les dropped the subject.

"What gets me," mused Jimmy, as they entered their room in the dormitory, "is the Colonel's order for a digest of that book. Wonder what he wants with it?"

"Probably feels the need of your expert knowledge——" began Les, only to cut the sentence short and dodge Jimmy's cap, hurled at his head.

For the next three days Jimmy Byers was busy almost every hour, even through some longer, harder hours when he should have been asleep. But on the fourth day he reported to Colonel Wagner and handed him a twelve-page summary of the book on railroads. The Colonel thanked him, and reminded him of his promise to join the hockey squad. Jimmy reported to Moore and Lieutenant Coleman that afternoon.

Les was for putting Jimmy on the first team, but Jimmy refused and was supported by Lieutenant Cole-

man. Jimmy urged he should join the second team, and work his way up to the regulars if he could. He felt none too sure of his ability to play the game, for the only similar game he had known was a cross between old-fashioned shinny and roller-polo adapted to the ice. The polo stick he had used was curved to permit hooking a rubber ball, and it could be swung aloft to drive the ball.

The hockey stick seemed awkward, and he found it difficult to refrain from swinging it. Shoving and sliding the puck did not give him the thrill he had found in a hard wallop at the rubber ball. But as he scrimmaged with the scrubs against the varsity Jimmy got into the spirit of the sport. Not as speedy as some of the other skaters, Jimmy managed to keep in the fight by dint of his earnestness. Two or three times he tilted at speed with Billy Armstrong, the fastest skater on the squad, only to be bested. But he kept at it, and the scrubs, spurred by his example, gave the varsity a battle.

"Best practise we've had," panted Les Moore, as the squad left the ice at a dog-trot en route for the gymnasium. "What's the matter with us, anyway?"

"Too busy to find out," breathed Jimmy. "Wait till I learn my own game."

That night, too, he refused to undertake a study of the varsity's trouble. And again the next night, after his scrubs had succeeded in forcing the varsity to an overtime period, he once more pleaded ignorance. Sunday there was no practise, naturally, but the boys took a long hike on snow-shoes. On Monday, Les and the Lieutenant asked Jimmy to play right wing on the varsity, replacing a boy named Jillson, to team with a youngster named Maines, playing left wing.

"But listen," Jimmy objected, "I don't know enough about the game——"

"You speeded up those scrubs to make us play overtime," argued Les.

"And we have to work out some new team system pretty quick," said Lieutenant Coleman. "The Norwood game is on Friday, which leaves us only four more days."

They overbore Jimmy's objections, and he took his place in the line-up. He played as hard as he could, though still feeling unfamiliar with the game. His fighting spirit bucked up the varsity so that it overwhelmed the second team. Next day it was the same story, with an encore on Wednesday. The varsity was now playing a harder, steadier game, passing well and controlling the puck.

"But there's still something lacking," complained Les Moore, Wednesday evening. He and Jimmy were sitting in their room, and Billy Armstrong, to their surprise, had dropped in.

"I think I know what it is," said Jimmy.

"Well, for the love of lemons, spit it out," exclaimed Billy. "These Norwood babies beat us nine to one early in the season."

"Let's have it, Jimmy," demanded Les.

"Well, I think I know what the trouble is, but I don't know enough about hockey to know the answer," Jimmy explained. "We've got a smooth passing game. Everybody works down the rink. Everybody shoves the puck to another fellow when he's about to be blocked, or cut off, or overtaken. But we haven't got anything else."

"What do you mean?" asked Billy.

"I mean, we haven't got an extra flash, the big kick, the punch," said Jimmy. "We don't smash through with a rush all at once when we need it. Too steady. Need a spark, so we can explode some goals."

"Rats," scoffed Billy. "Want us all to go crazy?"

"What would happen to our team-work?" demanded Les.

"I don't know," said Jimmy. "I told you I thought I knew the trouble, but not the answer. Got to think about that some more."

"Can't talk me out of the passing game," declared Billy belligerently. "Oh, you guys will laugh, because I used to grab the spotlight and make the pretty plays. But I'm sold on team-work now."

"I didn't say anything against the team-work, or passing," protested Jimmy. "I said we needed something else that we haven't got."

"You said a mouthful, too," Les announced. "We certainly do need something. Norwood figures to wallop us day after to-morrow. By George, I won't stand for it. We've *got* to do something. I'm not captain of a Lockerbie team that gets licked *twice* like that."

The other two boys echoed his determination, but when Billy went away to his own room, they had reached no answer to the problem. Nor did Thursday's final practise produce the solution. When the squad, headed by Lieutenant Coleman and Captain Les Moore, left Lockerbie Friday forenoon, taking train for the sixty-mile trip to Norwood, it was made up of boys who, like the light brigade, were starting a charge of grim despair.

All the Norwood student body, numbering twice that of Lockerbie, turned out to witness the game, glorying in an unbeaten team. Norwood's rink was a small pond scarcely larger than the regulation hockey space, surrounded by rather steep banks. Students swarmed on the banks to look down on the ice. They yelled, whistled and sang to keep warm in the near-zero weather, to cheer their team, and to discomfit the Lockerbie six, so badly beaten earlier in the season.

Les Moore led his squad out on the ice for practise first, and the boys warmed up. Then the Norwood team appeared, and Les withdrew the Lockerbie players. They pulled on sweaters and coats, and grouped about a fire at one end of the pond, up on the bank.

"We'll start with Byers and Maines, right and left wings; Armstrong, center; Moore and Waite, right and left defense, and Collins, goal," said Lieutenant Coleman.

"And every guy wants to fight," proclaimed Les. "Only way we can beat them is to try harder than they do, and keep on trying."

"Big as a college team," commented Jimmy, watching the Norwood men on the ice, and winking at little Maines. He saw that they two would be the smallest players in the game.

"The old team-work is what we want," spoke up Billy. "Keep passing till we get down by the goal. Cut the star stuff, see?"

"Let's go, gang," yelled Les, jerking off his sweater, and sliding out on the ice as the referee signaled it was time to start the game. Without any rooters to cheer them on, and engaging an enemy bigger, stronger and more skilful, on its own ground, the Lockerbie six grouped for a final hand-shake. Then they lined up.

The story of the first period is the story of a well-organized, well-coached team of strongly built, good skaters against a team of mixed abilities and little coaching. Norwood's team toyed with Lockerbie, outskating and outmaneuvering Moore's men. They scored two goals, and the only reason their margin was not larger was that they did not seem to be exerting themselves. Occasionally Lockerbie's passing game worked the puck down, only to find the Norwood de-

fense men and the center lined up across the ice to block a scoring play. Lockerbie could not score, though Les and Jimmy led a fighting six, and Billy Armstrong flashed about the ice with the speediest of the Norwood skaters.

"I've got an idea, Les," panted Jimmy, as they huddled around the fire. "Listen, if Billy will stay back, in between you and Waite, but some in front of you, that will help the defense. Maines and I will come back about the middle, at the sides, and you can all three pass, without waiting to be sure we're there. We'll get there, won't we, Maines?"

"Sure, s-s-sure," chattered Maines.

"But we can't win by stopping Norwood," growled Billy. "Gotta get some goals."

"Wrong again, Billy," snapped Les. "Jimmy's got the idea. Stop them first. Then figure how to score. C'mon, Billy. Jerk into it."

The second period began. After a few minutes, Norwood, sliding around like a well-oiled machine, slipped the puck past Russ Collins for her third goal. But then Jimmy's idea for a revised defense began to work. The stalwart Moore and husky John Waite guarded the sides of Lockerbie's territory, and Billy, matching speed with the best Norwood skaters, protected the middle. Norwood's steam-roller slowed down, and finally stopped. What looked like a runaway turned into a battle.

Several times Jimmy and little Maines received the puck and started valiantly goalward with it, passing to each other, and waiting for Billy to come down and help them. But each time, the Norwood men skated around them in time to line up for an unbreakable defense.

Norwood's captain, disgusted because his men were not piling up the score, made a mistake a few minutes

before the period ended. He called for time, and gathered his team for a conference. Norwood rooters demanded action.

"Hi, Les," yelled Jimmy, motioning the other Lockerbie players to gather round. "Listen, I've got it! What we need is a flash——"

"Can the riddles," muttered Billy.

"Our team-work and passing is slow and even gaited," explained Jimmy, grinning. "We need to break it up with a quick charge, a sort of thrust, see? When we've had the rubber, they've skated around us, and got down to their own territory to line up in front of us. All right——"

"Go ahead, shoot," said Les impatiently.

"Next time we get the puck in our territory, whoever gets it, pass to Maines or me, at one side, in the middle," explained Jimmy hurriedly, his eye on the Norwood conference. "One of us takes the pass, the other hustles down to their goal. Whoever gets the puck, goes slow, until somebody stops him. *Then*, all a time, Billy is coming up behind like the wind. If it's me, I slap the ball out to the *inside*, easy, and Billy sweeps it with him, full speed. Billy goes straight for the goal, and either shoots or passes to Maines. Get the idea?"

"Great stuff!" exclaimed Les. "Surprise 'em."

"Where's y'r team-work in that?" demanded Billy.

"Try it," insisted Jimmy. "We'll shoot you out at 'em, like a snake darts out its tongue."

"And they'll get stung!" yelled Les Moore.

Almost at once the Norwood six, aroused by their captain, brought the puck down, determined to score. But Waite blocked a pass, Les skated in front of a Norwood wing scrambling for the puck, and John recovered. Without looking to see whether Jimmy was at his post, John flipped the rubber to the right side

of the rink, at the middle of the playing space. Jimmy, waiting, intercepted it and started slowly toward the Norwood goal. He saw little Maines scurrying ahead. Then he heard the whir and ring of a Norwood defense, circling him, to bring up in front and block.

Without hesitating, Jimmy thrust the puck to his left, and to one side of the surprised guard. Then he scrambled around the defense, on the right side. Sure enough, Billy Armstrong, skating like a speed champion, swooped past, snatched the puck along with him and at that instant bore down on the surprised goal-keeper. The rest of the Norwood defending line was just scrambling into position, too late, when the goal-keeper, intent on blocking Billy's shot, leaped out to meet Billy. Dismayed, he helplessly watched Billy sweep the rubber to Maines, and the little chap flipped it into the net.

It was a pretty play, and even the Norwood rooters applauded. Heartened, the Lockerbie team redoubled its efforts. It tried the play twice more before the period ended, but each time the goal was missed, once by Maines, and once by Jimmy.

"Three to one, and we've got 'em worried," said Les, as the boys huddled around the fire during the intermission.

"We can win this game," declared Jimmy. "Here, Billy. Next time on that play, you shoot for the goal *yourself*, see? You've passed three times. Goal-keeper looks to you to pass. He'll watch me or Maines, so *you* shoot."

"Where's the team-work?" demanded Billy. "This is no one-star team."

"No *all*-star team, either, or we'd be out in front," said Les.

The third period started. Billy unwillingly obeyed orders. Within three minutes Lockerbie scored, Billy

shooting the goal after a hard fast dash down the center. And two minutes later it worked again, although two of the Norwood men were riding Billy hard. Each time it was Jimmy who received the puck from scrimmage, and snapped it in front of Billy as he skimmed down the ice. Norwood, confronted with a tied score by a despised team, fought with a frenzy. Play was furious, and the crowd kept up a roar.

Baffled, with only a few minutes left, the Norwood captain called for a substitute. Jimmy hastily conferred with Les and Billy.

"Another idea," he said quickly. "They'll try to smother Billy. This fresh man, probably, to do it. Now then. Get *me* the puck, same as before. Billy come down, as usual. Les, *you* ride off the fresh man if he gets on Billy, but, Billy, instead of passing inside when I'm blocked, I'll try to get around this defense, *outside*, and keep the puck. I'll go along the side-line, and when you're in front of the goal, I'll shoot 'er over, and *you* put 'er in. Hey?"

"Thatta boy," exclaimed Les. "Watch me ride this baby."

"Aw, whaddayuh think I am, a hog?" demanded Billy.

"Forget it," snapped Les. "This goes."

It went. Jimmy, though a novice at hockey, had scented the Norwood plan. First he had to elude a Norwood wing to snare a pass from Waite at his customary receiving point. That done, he started down the side-line, about eight feet inside. Norwood's new man swarmed on Billy's trail just as Billy started his lightning rush, but was cut off by a wild dash on Moore's part, Les swooping in between them to cut him off and leave Billy free.

"Hi, Billy," yelled Jimmy, bluffing a pass to the left. A Norwood defense looming up before him,

scrambled to break down the pass. Jimmy, keeping the rubber before him, swerved to the right, dangerously near the side-line, and then winged goalward, paralleling Billy's flight. The goal-keeper, expecting another charge from Billy, prepared to meet it. But, gathered to spring the block, he saw Billy did not have the rubber. He relaxed.

At that instant, working as if one mechanism, Jimmy slid the puck to Billy, who blocked it, turned it and shot it into the netting, all in one motion. Four to three, for Lockerbie! Norwood's crowd, bitterly disappointed, could not help applauding a beautiful play, executed as perfectly as if it had been rehearsed a thousand times.

But high above the polite Norwood cheer shrilled a screaming defiance from the four Lockerbie substitutes and Lieutenant Coleman, mingling with a roar from the jubilant Les Moore. Two minutes of determined defense against a wild, surging Norwood attack saw the game ended. And a Lockerbie victory, at last, four to three, with three goals to Billy's credit.

"Aw, you guys make me sick," complained Billy Armstrong. This was on the train going home. Ten Lockerbie boys were deliriously happy, and Lieutenant Coleman admitted he hadn't had such a thrill since he got back home from France. "You guys make me sick. You break up a good basketball team, put me out of a game, and then blame near knock my head off—to teach me team-play. Every man for the team, see?"

"One for all," grinned Jimmy.

"Somebody's been reading *The Three Musketeers*," laughed Lieutenant Coleman.

"Yeah, and then when I get that through my head, you kick it all out again. Team-work? Had me doing all the pretty stuff," growled Billy.

"That's because you could do it better'n the rest of

us," exclaimed Les. "Doing the star stuff on your own hook and to heck with us, is one thing. But when we pull together, and organize, and work to put it up to you, why——"

"*That* is real team-work," declared Lieutenant Coleman.

"And all for one," said Jimmy.

CHAPTER V

SANDY MCGEE PUTS OUT

SANDY McGee was a roughneck. He knew little of the inside of books, and paid scant attention to the interior of heads. But he could tell better than another what a heart contained. Sandy, trainer of all the athletic teams at Lockerbie Hall, served also as coach of the track squad, and it was here that he learned to judge the hearts of boys and men.

"Put out, or get put out," was Sandy's motto. He lived this motto for himself, and he preached it for all others. For the members of the track squad, he set it up as a guide and enforced it as law.

"Here's the idea," said Sandy over and over to aspiring athletes. "You go out to play a game of football on Saturday. Give it all you've got, every last ounce, see? Then the next Saturday, you do the same thing, and what is the result? Why, you've got a little more to give, that's all. It's the way to grow, get me? Play the string clear to the end, so hard that you put out more'n yuh knew yuh had. Put out every time, and after while y've got more to put out."

That's the story of Sandy's motto,—the first half of it.

"And any fellow on any team that I've got anything to do with," he announced to each squad he handled, "will put out. He'll put out everything he's got, or else he'll get put out of the game, or the meet, or whatever it is we're in."

Because Sandy preached his motto so forcefully and insisted on upholding his rule, Lockerbie Hall al-

most invariably turned out hard-fighting, consistently trying teams. Lockerbie fives, sixes, nines and elevens might lack the artistic finish of their opponents on court, ice, diamond and gridiron, but Lockerbie teams always put out. And, consequently, Lockerbie teams won most of their games. Moreover, Lockerbie boys who trained under Sandy McGee almost invariably went through college athletics and later business careers with credit and honor to themselves.

Many instances might be cited to show the working out of Sandy's rule, but it is easier and perhaps just as convincing to tell the one story, the story of Jimmy Byers and how he ran afoul of Sandy's dictum. For, as has often been said, it is the exception that proves the rule. Sandy, infallible in judging the fighting contents of hearts, misread the sturdy Jimmy, and the boy himself, a hard-fighting youngster, ignored the rule. And then loyal Les Moore, Jimmy's buddy, had to come along and put out,—but that is telling the story before it is ready to be told.

At Lockerbie, as at most schools where boys are permitted to take part in more than one sport, a small group dominated all the athletic activities. The same boys who carried the heaviest share of the football burden formed the backbone of the basketball team. They also starred in baseball, and when the track team entered a meet, these same fellows were called out for yeoman service on track and field.

Byers was one of these standby reliances. His chum, Moore, was another. Les ranged from full-back to running guard to catcher on the baseball team, and joined the track team in emergencies as a weight man. Both starred in basketball because they put out, as McGee phrased it, while Billy Armstrong, captain of the five, revolted against training, and was suspended. Billy did not like putting out. As far as his natural,

easy-going talents would carry him, Billy went, but a soft upbringing by a wealthy father and an indulgent mother made it doubly hard for Billy to exert himself to what Sandy called the pop-eyed limit.

"Sandy said for me to begin doing some running," said Jimmy to Les, one evening in mid-April as they were leaving the gymnasium after baseball practise. "Wants me to do the half and the mile, and try out for the broad jump. Did he say anything to you?"

"Yeah, said he'd have to count on me to do the heavy work in the weights this year, because Morgan's gone," Les replied.

"Do you suppose Billy will go out?" asked Jimmy.

"Well, he told me Sandy asked him to try the low hurdles, the high jump and the mile," said Les. "But he has never done much in track. Says he can't get the hang of it."

"Because he never learned how to put out," commented Jimmy. "But, you know, since he got straightened out in basketball, and we had our fight, I believe he goes at games different. Look at the way he came through in hockey, when we laid down on him and put it up to him to deliver."

"Well, he might make a track man, at that," Les agreed. "But it's up to him and nobody else."

"I'd like to see him crack through," Jimmy continued. "He's a good scout, Billy is, when you get to know him. What do you suppose he's done now? After all the row we had, and the fight he and I put on, he's insisted I've got to go home with him this summer and visit."

"Is that so? Well, he's certainly a white guy," said Les. "I figured he'd hold that old grudge against you till kingdom come. Give it to him, he's all right."

"So if I can help him make good in track, I'm going to do it," Jimmy declared.

"Better leave that to Sandy," counseled Les. "Wonder what we've got to eat to-night."

"What I mean," Jimmy insisted, "I thought he was a short sport and a spoiled baby, but I've changed my mind. He's a good scout, and I'm for him."

Les, interested in dinner, made no reply, but led the way to the dining-room; Jimmy, reflecting that any fellow who could be shown up wrong before all the school and then whipped to boot must be a real sportsman to forgive the man who whipped him and offer friendship, followed.

Track work, already under way for the track men not taking part in baseball, began next day for the baseball players needed to bolster Sandy's forces. Les and Jimmy, with Billy and one or two others, worked out under Sandy's direction a half-hour each afternoon, just before donning suits for baseball practise. The boys doubling in athletics led a strenuous life for three long weeks, preceding the annual dual track and field meet with Wilkes Academy. Jimmy and Les threw themselves into the work with their usual energy, and noted, too, that Billy Armstrong seemed enthusiastic, working harder than he had ever been known to work at Lockerbie.

"Don't know whether I can get the hang of this low hurdle business or not," Billy complained to them. "Quite a trick to it. And when you get the trick, you've got to be a regular clock, clicking off the steps and jumps like the tick of an old grandfather's."

"Sandy says you've got to be a machine to make good in track," said Jimmy.

"Well, it's a tough life, but I'm going to win a track letter if it hamstring me," laughed Billy. "Didn't get my football or basketball letter, but, by George, I'm gonna crack through on this track stuff."

"Thatta boy," exclaimed Les Moore.

"You ought to grab a first place in the high jump, low hurdles or the mile," Jimmy said. "The mile's easy, and you're long-legged——"

"Yeah, but for some reason, the mile's the toughest thing I ever tackled," Billy interrupted. "Maybe it's because I've lived too soft and started training too late, but I have to fight to get around that track the fourth time."

Billy matched enthusiasm with Jimmy and Les in the track workouts, and trained faithfully. Jimmy, who had run the half and the mile a year before, added his own advice to the instructions of Sandy McGee in an effort to help Billy find himself as a track man. But he received instructions from Sandy to take it somewhat easy in the track preparation, and to work out with Les in putting the shot. Though not a big muscular chap, Jimmy was wiry and had a knack of putting all his strength into every effort. Sandy needed weight men, for Les was the only one available with experience. Moreover, he schooled Jimmy severely in the broad jump, so that Jimmy had little time to devote to encouraging Billy, much as he desired to help. When night came, following forenoon classes, military drill, track practise and the baseball workout, Jimmy was too tired to do anything more, even to talk with his new chum.

"I'll be glad when this track meet's over and we won't have anything but baseball to worry about," said Billy, dropping in on Les and Jimmy just after luncheon, the day of the meet with Wilkes. "Track's a tough game. I'm gonna give it all I've got this afternoon, and then I hope I never get coaxed on to a track team again. It's not my style, but I sure hope I make a letter to-day."

"You can do it," said Les.

"Sure, go out and get 'em," urged Jimmy. "You're

in the low hurdles, the high jump and the mile, and you certainly can land a first in one of the three. That will get your letter for you."

"Sounds easy," muttered Billy who, for the first time in his life, was drawn and haggard from hard training.

"It *is* easy, if you try *hard*," exclaimed Jimmy. "If you fight hard enough it is easy, just like anything else. You can do it. Go get 'em."

"We'd better be getting down to the gym," suggested Les.

Sandy McGee gathered his boys around him in the dressing-room for one last appeal.

"Boys," he said soberly, earnestly, "I haven't anything more to tell you about running or jumping or weight handling. All the coaching is done. You know as much as I can tell you, if you will only remember it. Do what you've been coached to do, that's all.

"But," and he paused to look slowly around him into all their faces, "there is one other thing to remember. Lockerbie men put out. They give all they've got, and then give extra efforts. And when they don't put out, they get put out. Any man that does not push himself clear to his limit, and beyond it, comes out of this meet. Why? Because he is throwing Lockerbie down, and throwing himself down! But you will all put out,—I know that.

"And so if Wilkes has a better team than we have, and I think they have, it won't make any difference. We can win if we will, if every man puts out. Now then, let's get out there, and see what we can do. C'mon, boys."

The drama of the track and field meet is made up of many individual, personal dramas. Each event in itself is drama, consisting of as many smaller plots as there are contestants. Who, then, would describe such

a drama, unless he wished to recite every action, every finish, every effort put forth by the contestants? Every event furnishes a new climax, every contest a new struggle. And each little drama supplies tragedy or comedy of its own. How tell the whole story of a track and field meet?

The low hurdles, early in the program, furnished dire tragedy for the hopeful Billy. Armstrong, off well, led his field the first hundred yards. Then, anxious to press his advantage, he put on speed, and toppled three hurdles in succession. Off balance as he rose for the third, he failed to clear, and almost fell. Bitterly disappointed, he lost his race and his first chance at the coveted "L." On the other hand, Jimmy found a happy ending in the half-mile run, for, putting out to the limit of his endurance, he outlasted a Wilkes opponent in a sprint for the tape, and won. Too, Les won through to success in the discus throw, not because he was any more powerful than his Wilkes opponent, but because he controlled his balance and his timing to a greater nicety.

But Jimmy met tragedy in the broad jump for, although he strained every nerve and leaped with all the speed and strength he could throw into the take-off, he could finish no better than third. And Billy, unnerved by his humiliating experience in the low hurdles, seemed all at sea in the high jump. Every time he threw himself into the air to clear the bar, he remembered the toppling low hurdles. He tried his utmost, but could not compete with the boys from Wilkes, who scored a slam in the event.

The last of the track events was the mile run, and the concluding number on the field program, the shot-put. Lockerbie rooters pinned their hopes on these two contests, but so did the few loyal Wilkes visitors at the struggle, for the two teams were practically

tied, Lockerbie having mustered fifty-two points, to fifty-one for Wilkes Academy. But Lockerbie was confident, with Jimmy Byers in the run, and Les Moore putting the shot.

"Gosh, it's tight," exclaimed Billy to Jimmy Byers, as they approached the start for the mile run. "Hope I don't fall down."

"Pull yourself together," urged Jimmy. "You can win this race, and your letter with it. Come on. Can you stay with me?" he taunted.

"Show you," muttered Billy.

"Come on, boys, let's see you put out," exclaimed the nervous Sandy McGee. "Get away the best you can, and keep going."

"We're ready," said Jimmy.

The starter called them together, warned them not to beat the gun, and ordered them to their marks. They toed the marks, set themselves, and in a jiffy, were off. Jimmy left his marks flying, to command an early lead and set the pace. Once clear, he settled into an even methodical stride, a stride that seemed ridiculously long for his short legs but a stride that he swung without effort. A quick glance over his shoulder to the right told him that Billy Armstrong had pulled clear of the two Wilkes men, and was close beside him.

Relieved, Jimmy planned a campaign. Confident that he could defeat the Wilkes men because he had beaten them a year before, Jimmy decided to "carry" Billy Armstrong to victory and the coveted "L." He determined to set a hard early pace, and kill off the Wilkes men if possible, at the same time taunting Billy to make him hold his position.

"C'mon, Billy, let's go," he called, making the second turn.

Down the back straightway, Jimmy quickened the

long stride and fairly ate up the cinder track. Right with him, running with a longer but slower stride, came the lanky Billy Armstrong, nettled at Jimmy's challenge. Rounding the third turn, Jimmy cast a quick glance over his left shoulder. One Wilkes man, he saw, was fairly close up behind Billy. The other apparently was ready to drop out of it thus early. Therefore Jimmy held his speed. And Billy Armstrong hung to him. Down before the stands they went, Jimmy first, Billy close beside him, and a Wilkes man five yards to the rear. In the far straightaway again, the second Wilkes man gave up the chase.

Jimmy's strategy had disposed of him, but for fear he might kill off himself and Billy as well if he maintained the clip, Jimmy relaxed somewhat and slowed down. On the turn he once more looked hurriedly back, and was relieved to find the Wilkes man had likewise slackened speed. This man either wished them to set the pace, or lacked the drive to take command.

So they finished the second lap, and ran through the third. Jimmy still ran evenly, smoothly, with a mechanical action that seemed tireless. But to Billy Armstrong, the race had begun to be a nightmare. Already, with a quarter still to run and the finish to be fought out, Billy was in distress. And the Wilkes man hung on, five yards back, running doggedly.

"Take his spring out of him right now," thought Jimmy. Aloud, he called to Billy, "Let's go, kid. Time to win 'is race." And once more he put on steam, to lengthen the long stride, without lengthening the intervals in which his spikes hit the cinders. Billy Armstrong, fighting desperately for breath and strength, went with him, and for the moment they pulled away from the Wilkes man. At the far turn, Jimmy eased up ever so slightly, and for the fourth time hastily

turned his head. They had added perhaps five yards to their advantage over the enemy.

"Guess that'll hold him," figured Jimmy craftily. He wanted earnestly for Billy to win this race. It would, he thought, be the making of his new chum. Wherefore, he dragged, figuratively dragged Billy with him around the turn. Straightening for the final dash, he again taunted the taller boy.

"Layin' down?" he panted. "C'mon, let's see yuh take me!"

"All done," puffed Billy, every breath hurting him.

"Quitter?" snapped Jimmy. "I'll leave yuh flat!"

So saying, he pretended to sprint, and rejoiced, even as he did so, to find his strategy working. Billy Armstrong, fighting in desperation, crazily angry at Jimmy's insinuation, put forth his last supreme effort and, although comparatively an untrained runner, struggled to the fore. Arms waving too high, legs forgetting the old rhythmic stride, he thrashed his way into the lead. Jimmy stayed close at his side, but relinquished the advantage. His game was working! Old Billy could make good, after all.

And then comedy turned to tragedy. For the Wilkes man, after sturdily following the pace for three laps and refusing to match sprints, finally cut loose with a sprint of his own. Jimmy and Billy had swerved out into the middle of the track, Billy at Jimmy's right. His eyes alternately on the finish line and on the struggling Billy, now in front of him, Jimmy did not notice the onrushing enemy at his left. Only a yell of warning from the bleachers as the tape came in sight told him of the danger. And then it was too late. The Wilkes man passed Jimmy before Jimmy could pull himself together. Only twenty yards were left. In a last frantic effort, Jimmy rushed and sprang at the tape, but the steady, even-striding enemy not

only passed the wavering, wobbling Billy, but held a yard's advantage as his breast swept the line from the hands of the finish judges.

Billy, utterly exhausted after his game struggle, collapsed on the cinders. Jimmy, heart-broken, caught him in his frantic stride, and turned off into the grass of the infield. He cast himself upon the ground. Had he lost the meet for Lockerbie? Dimly he remembered that the score was practically tied at the start of the race,—and now Wilkes had added five points to Lockerbie's four, all because of his plan to make Billy Armstrong come through with a winning effort! Panting and groaning in his misery, he heard the announcer proclaim a tied score, at fifty-six points all. But the shot-put,—here, he must pull himself together.

Nervily, he struggled to his feet, steadied himself and looked about. Over in the middle of the field the weight men were making their last efforts. Jimmy was entered to help out Les Moore with the shot. Shaking his head and taking a firm grip on his nerves, Jimmy trudged weakly toward the scene. He must make good now for his failure in the run. He could have won that race, except for his silly idea about Billy.

One does not run the half and the mile, ordinarily, and then turn in to shine in the shot-put. Jimmy might have carried on if he had been buoyed up with the triumph of winning his two races, but now he was both weary and heartsick. Les was standing at one side of the group, awaiting his final turn with the shot.

"Les, go get 'em," he panted. "Listen, you've got to. I threw us down. Could have won, but, but,—now we're tied."

"See what I can do," said the matter-of-fact Les. "But this big dude's got me licked so far. Throws the shot as if it were a baseball."

"Maybe I can land a place," muttered Jimmy.

But just then Sandy McGee, thoroughly angry, arrived. He had left the shot-put a few minutes before to witness the finish of the mile run, and had remained at the track to minister to the fallen Billy Armstrong.

"You're through," he flatly announced to Jimmy. "Yuh didn't put out in that finish. No shot-put for you. Go in and dress."

Bewildered, but dumbly accepting the punishment and owning his guilt, Jimmy turned away. He took a few steps across the grass toward the gymnasium, and then tumbled down in a heap on the ground. If he cried like a child, why not? Les Moore, at a loss to understand clearly, stared first at Jimmy and then at little Sandy McGee.

"You're up," snapped Sandy to Les. "Go in and win, or we lose the meet. Throw 'at old iron ball away!"

Hardly hearing Sandy's words, but dimly realizing he must make good to cover up his buddy's failure, Les gritted his teeth, picked up the shot and strode into the circle. Crouched, leaning far back, the shot poised in gripping fingers, Les unleashed all his power and snapped into a supreme effort. Anger and desperation drove him, and he fairly whipped the shot away from him. Les put out! Following through to the last inch of perfect balance, he watched the ball's flight. Then a flush of exultation replaced the red of angry determination. He knew he had won,—an effort a foot better than his previous best, and four inches beyond the Wilkes' heavyweight's. Lockerbie sixty-one, Wilkes Academy, sixty.

Then Les ran to pick up Jimmy Byers.

Billy Armstrong saw the list of letter men for track posted in the gymnasium. He did not expect to see his own name, but he was amazed that Jimmy's name was

omitted. Jimmy won the half-mile, and was entitled to a letter, he reasoned. Therefore, acting promptly with inspiration, Billy entered Sandy McGee's office. Sandy refused to believe his story. Billy argued and pleaded. Finally Sandy agreed to ask Colonel Wagner to consider the case, with Byers present. They gathered in the office of the gymnasium.

"I have a rule that a man puts out, or gets put out," concluded Sandy, after opening the meeting and telling the story of the track meet. "If a man quits, out he goes. I will not recommend a letter for a man who wins one event, if he quits in another."

"But I'm telling you he didn't quit," exclaimed Billy. "He could have won that race, only——"

"If he could, and didn't, he quit," snapped Sandy, glaring first at Billy and then at Jimmy, who, ill at ease and sick over the whole business, wondered what he could say or do.

"He wanted me to win that race," argued Billy doggedly, "and I couldn't. I just couldn't go any faster, that's all. If anybody quit, I did. Jimmy didn't."

"Let's see about this," interrupted Colonel Wagner. "Jimmy, is this true?" Jimmy could only nod his head in affirmation. He tried to speak, but his tongue was dry. "Because you thought that would be the fine sportsmanlike thing to do?" continued the Colonel.

"Yes, sir, and because I never dreamed that Wilkes man could come up and get us," said Jimmy, suddenly bursting into speech. "You see, sir, I wanted——"

"Never mind, Jimmy," and the Colonel held up his hand. "Sandy, I recommend you give the letter to Jimmy. You are right in that he quit on the mile. But he won his race in the half-mile, so he should have the 'L.' But, Jimmy," and he turned back to the boy again, "Jimmy, let's think about this for a minute. You thought it the sporting thing to do?"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy Byers.

"Well, I'll agree with you on half of it," said the Colonel. "It is fine of you to want Billy to get his letter. Fine of you to make the sacrifice. *But*,—how about Billy?"

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Jimmy wonderingly.

"How would Billy feel about wearing a letter he had not earned? Would Billy take such a letter? Would you?"

"No, sir." The phrase sprang from the lips of the two boys simultaneously. "I hadn't thought of that," added Jimmy, in a faltering tone.

"That's right, that's right," exclaimed the Colonel, rising from his chair. "Sandy, it looks like we've learned something from all this trouble. When sportsmanship goes so far as to become charity, then it is no longer——" and he looked at Billy Armstrong and Jimmy Byers.

"Sportsmanship," they said, together. And then Jimmy added, slowly:

"It looks to me like I owe an apology to Lockerbie and Sandy and especially Billy. I didn't think how he would feel about this thing."

Without realizing it, Jimmy had climbed his third step toward varsity heights, and was ready to tackle yet another.

CHAPTER VI

STEP FOUR

"GIVE 'em everything you've got," demanded Sandy McGee. In the dressing-room at the gymnasium, Sandy, pinch hitting for Lieutenant Coleman, regular baseball coach, was addressing Captain Byers and his squad. Somewhat short on baseball, but long on enthusiasm, Sandy had led the team through a rather disastrous season. Now the last game was to be played against Lockerbie's old rival, Norwood.

"Give 'em everything you've got," he begged. "And if you haven't got everything, why, give 'em everything you *have* got, see?"

An impetuous little Irishman, Sandy looked about him with fire in his eyes. He hoped, by his words, to work the boys into a pitch of excitement that would carry them through to victory. But he was disappointed. Several of the players wore expressions of determination, but while he was scanning their faces hurriedly, he heard a chuckle. Somebody laughed.

"What's that?" he snapped quickly, looking at big Les Moore, the catcher.

"I was just laughing," said Les apologetically. "Couldn't help it, Sandy, honest."

"What about?"

"Well, if we haven't got everything, we give 'em everything, anyhow," grinned Les. "That's a good one, Sandy."

"Yeah, if we haven't got anything, give 'em anything we have got," chimed in Billy Armstrong, lanky

first-baseman. Some of the boys laughed, and poor Sandy turned red in embarrassment.

"That's exactly what I meant," he began. "You boys listen to me——"

"Sandy," spoke up Jimmy Byers, rising from the bench, "let me speak this piece."

Jimmy stood up and faced first the trainer and coach, and then the squad of youngsters ranged around the dressing-room. Determination written in his expression caused Sandy to yield to him.

"Fellows," said Jimmy, "I ought not butt in on Sandy when he has something to say, but he is right. We must give Norwood everything we've got, and if that isn't everything, why we must still give them all we have. Got to play the string out, see? If you fellows were as hot about winning this game as Sandy is, instead of feeling like laughing at the way he tells us to fight, we'd win in a walk.

"Les, and you too, Billy," he turned to the pair of taller, bigger boys, "I'll see you after the game about this laughing matter. Even if you, Les, are my bunkie, and Billy is a pal of mine. You've got a lot of crust, the pair of you. No, wait a minute, there is something I want to say to the whole bunch."

He paused and swept a glance about the group.

"You fellows elected me captain of this team," he resumed, "and as captain I want to talk a minute. We've made a mess of this season. We've played eight games and lost five of them. We lost two games because we did not fight to the limit against better teams; and we lost one when we were the better team, because we did not fight it out. Now then,—this is my last game. It is Moore's last, and Billy's last, and Tom Willoughby's last,—for Lockerbie. Tom's going to pitch this game, and Les will catch, as usual. Billy will be on first base, and I'll be on third.

"We've got to win this game. I know Norwood licked us, eight to two, at Norwood last month, but that makes no difference. We've got to win," Jimmy declared aggressively. "I for one am not going away from old Lockerbie, to remember my last game as a loss. My last fight is *not* going to be a licking. How about it, you seniors?"

"Atta boy, Jimmy," exclaimed Les, Billy and long Tom Willoughby, in chorus.

"And you other fellows?" demanded Jimmy.

"With you, old top," yelled the rest of the squad.

"All right," said Jimmy. "Let's go get 'em. We haven't had our regular coach, but Sandy has helped us. We've got a good line-up, now, and Norwood will expect to lick us easily because we fell down on their diamond. They will not expect the fight we can give 'em, so that we can surprise 'em and win. But we've got to fight, and Sandy was right. Give 'em everything we've got, and if we haven't got everything, give 'em everything we *have* got. C'mon, let's go!"

"We can take these babies," exclaimed Les Moore. "Tom, you lay that old leather right in my mitt with all you can put on it, and they won't get a hit until next Easter!"

He grasped Willoughby by the arm, and swept him in behind Jimmy, leading the way out of the gym toward the baseball field. Billy Armstrong, busily engaged in rubbing a drop of oil into his flat first-baseman's mitt, followed with the rest. The team fairly surged down upon the field, and worked out with a zest that carried foreboding to the Norwood squad. Fielding practise went through with a snap, and when the team's regulars came in for hitting practise, every man cut and smashed at the ball as if it were his mortal enemy seeking to destroy him. Smithson, a left-handed youngster, pitched for batting practise.

"They'll use Morton, their left-hander, against us," said Jimmy to Sandy McGee, on the bench while Norwood worked out. "He's their best bet, and they're anxious to win and take down the championship. We couldn't hit him the first time, because we hadn't looked at any left-handed pitching, but all the work we've had against Smithson will help us. See if it doesn't."

"Oughta help," agreed Sandy. "And say, Jimmy, listen. You take charge of the team for this game. I'll be right here on the bench, alla time, if you want me for anything, but you run the team. It's your game, see?"

"Signals?" asked Jimmy.

"Yep, and everything else," said Sandy. "Go to it."

"Well, all right, I'm game," Jimmy replied. "But nothing will come up. If anything does, we'll talk it over."

Norwood finished preliminary practise, and the umpire walked out on the field to call the game. Jimmy motioned the Lockerbie players to the bench.

"All right, gang," he said, when they had gathered round him. "Sandy has asked me to run the team for this game. We'll do what he says: give 'em everything we've got, and if we haven't got everything, we'll give 'em everything we *have* got. Winning this game won't get us anywhere in the intermountain league. But it will keep Les and Tom and Billy and yours truly from quitting as losers at Lockerbie, and it will help us remember there are still some winners here when we've gone. Let's go!"

While the game is getting under way, the umpire dusting off the plate, Tom Willoughby working out his wide side-arm delivery, and the Lockerbie infield throws a ball about, it may be well to hesitate a moment. Jimmy's words have told what the last game means to the schoolboy. His yearning to quit with

a victory is understandable. Every boy in Lockerbie is at the game to root for the seniors and the school. Friends coming early for commencement the next week are on hand in numbers. A large delegation from Norwood, some miles up the valley, has come down to root for the Norwood nine. It is the typical last game, with a championship team faced by a weaker, less skilful but more determined line-up.

Jimmy's willingness to accept Sandy McGee's order that he take charge of the team is easy to understand. After a poor season under his captaincy, partly because of lack of coaching, the team can do no worse under Jimmy than it would under Sandy, admittedly not a student of baseball. Sandy prefers to trust the game to Jimmy's determination and resourcefulness, and Jimmy takes orders. He is that kind of a soldier.

But he is a poor prophet. He tells Sandy he will give the signals and run the team, consulting Sandy if anything out of the ordinary occurs. But nothing can happen, according to Jimmy. In that opinion, he is wrong, and it is to show that he was wrong that this story is written, and also to prove that Sandy's policy of giving everything, even to that which you have not, is the paying policy.

"Play ball, batter up!" called the umpire.

With Lockerbie in the field, Willoughby started the game, pitching like a major leaguer. His side-arm delivery puzzled the Norwood hitters, who could not fathom the ball coming at them from an angle with great speed. Almost unconsciously they pulled back from the plate, thinking each ball would hit them. In the first inning, he walked a man, but after the next hitter accomplished a sacrifice, he got the next two for infield outs. Norwood, though puzzled by the side-arm pitching, took the field in confident mood.

"Till further orders, everybody hit the first good ball," said Jimmy, as Lockerbie went to bat. "They won't expect us to attack that way."

Little Shorty Wentworth, second-baseman, and lead-off man, went up to hit and promptly smacked the first ball for a line drive over second base. Byers, hitting as sacrifice man in second place, bunted on the first ball served him. He succeeded in pulling the ball down the third base-line so that the third-baseman would have to field it, and then, by sprinting, beat the throw to first. Meantime, little Wentworth, arms and legs fanning the air like a windmill, whirled into third base. The crowd roared applause and demanded runs.

Moore faced the Norwood pitcher, who once more grooved the first ball. Les took a toe-hold and swung with all his might, driving the ball far into center field, but the center-fielder, playing deep, had no trouble making a catch. He could not get the ball home in time to cut off Wentworth, however, and the little chap slid over the plate with the first run of the game.

Jimmy wisely held his place on first base, and signaled Armstrong, a left-handed hitter, to wait out the Norwood pitcher. Morton, pitching with greater speed than usual because he was angry at the successful attack on his delivery, wasted the first ball. Then he wasted a second. Billy refused to swing at the third, a strike, and finally walked. But the next two Lockerbie hitters could not advance Jimmy and Billy. Morton's fast ball was too much for them.

"We're out in front, gang," yelled Jimmy, as the team lined up afield. "Let's stay there. C'mon, Tom, old boy, let's go."

Fired with enthusiasm, Willoughby cut loose with all he had and, backed by some fiery fielding, retired Norwood hitters in order. Once more Lockerbie went

to the attack. Willoughby, a good hitter for a pitcher, pounded the first ball for a long two-bagger to left center. The next man fanned, and another lined to the first-baseman. But little Shorty Wentworth beat out a hit to the second-baseman, and long Tom Willoughby took third. This brought up Jimmy Byers again, and the doughty captain determined to fool the Norwood infield, expecting him to hit with two men down and two on base, by bunting. He therefore laid another bunt down the third base-line, and long Tom Willoughby rushed for home alongside the surprised third-baseman, scrambling for the ball.

To beat the toss to the plate, long Tom slid, an awkward, rolling slide, and scored the second run. Wentworth, seeing the third-baseman draw in again, once more sprinted for third, and Jimmy hustled for second. The Norwood catcher hastily shot the ball to third base, but he threw over the head of the short-stop, hurrying to take the throw, and Wentworth likewise scored. Three runs. Jimmy took third, where he died when Les Moore, trying to kill the ball, fanned.

The Lockerbie fans clamored applause at their team's unexpected attacking strength, and Jimmy's bunch patted one another on the back. As they took the field, Jimmy ran over to speak to long Tom Willoughby, and then noticed with dismay that the rally was likely to prove costly. Long Tom was limping.

"What's the matter, Tom?" asked Jimmy.

"Turned my ankle sliding home," muttered Willoughby. "Can't seem to get it straightened out."

"Hurt?" queried Jimmy.

"Yeah, but I'll be all right in a little bit," growled the tall boy. But Jimmy noticed that he gritted his teeth in pain as he spoke.

"Tough luck, but maybe it will straighten out," he said. "Let's hold 'em, with this three-run lead."

It was his left ankle Tom had turned, and he soon found it made a world of difference in his pitching. The first ball he pitched to a Norwood hitter told him that it hurt to throw his weight on the left foot as he followed through on his delivery. The second and third hurt even worse, with the result that Tom unconsciously shortened his pitching stride and swing to favor the throbbing ankle. By doing so he unbalanced his delivery, and threw away control. He walked the first man.

"Never mind that," whispered Jimmy, trotting over for a conference. "Tom, I'm sorry I pulled that bunt. Might have known it would make a close play at the plate and you'd have to slide."

"I should worry," grinned Tom. "We've got three runs. I'll hold 'em somehow."

But studying the tall fellow closely, Jimmy saw him wince as he placed his weight on the left foot.

"Take it easy for a little bit," suggested Jimmy.

Tom eased up on the next delivery, and grooved what would have been a perfect strike had not the hitter smashed the ball. He drove it right back to Tom on a line, so hard that the lanky pitcher could not get out of the way. He put out his right hand. By some freak of fortune, this hurried stab at the ball gave him a catch. But a stroke of misfortune attended the lucky put-out. The ball split his hand between the first and second fingers, and bruised his whole palm.

The end of the inning found Norwood with three runs, and the game tied. Only a fast and lucky double play, started by Jimmy after taking a grounder down the foul-line, ended the session. Long Tom, though striving gamely, could not pitch any more! Disregarding the disaster, Jimmy hurried Tom off the field, and delivered him over to Sandy McGee for first aid.

"Smithy," he called to Smithson, the little left-hander, "will you warm up?"

Then, while Sandy McGee wound a strip of tape around Tom's hand, and hurriedly bound the tall fellow's ankle, he called Les Moore and Billy Armstrong into a council of war on the bench.

"Can't use Tom any longer," he announced. "Poor guy's foot is half killing him, and he's split his hand. Now then,——"

"They'll murder Smithy," muttered Billy.

"Won't get a chance," said Jimmy crisply. "Not till they've murdered another guy, anyhow. Here's my scheme,—listen. Billy, you go out and pitch——"

"Haven't pitched an inning this year."

"Never mind. We can't trust Smithy because he's green, and because they're used to left-handed pitching," argued Jimmy. "They'd hit him all over the works. You go in there, and use nothing but a fast straight ball, high overhand, see? That's your best ball. Keep it coming down from away up in the air. They've been watching Tom's side-arm ball, and they'll think this overhand ball of yours is dropping on 'em out of the clouds, see? And we'll put Tom on first base."

"Gotta get some more runs," agreed Les, "and if Tom drops out we lose a hitter. Boy, he smacked 'at old apple a while ago."

"What d'yuh say, Billy?" insisted Jimmy.

"Well, all right," said Billy. "Maybe I can find the plate, and I'll put on all the steam I can."

"You lay the ball right where I want it," Les declared, "and we'll hold 'em."

"Atta boy," exclaimed Jimmy. "Fast ball, overhand. They've been ducking Tom's fork ball, and they're now sizing up Smithy. We'll surprise 'em."

Tom Willoughby willingly agreed to shift to first

base, replacing Billy, and Sandy McGee approved the switch. Jimmy asked him to explain the move to Smithson, and request Smithson to keep himself warmed up for a hurry call to the box. The inning ended, Lockerbie took the field with the revised lineup.

Billy Armstrong ambled into the box, while Tom hobbled to first base, and the crowd gasped in surprise. Norwood hitters, who had expected to see little Smithson come out to a slaughter, stared at the tall form on the mound. Billy, who had pitched a few games the preceding year and then shifted to first base because he could not control his curve ball, warmed up with a few careless tosses to Les Moore behind the plate. But when the Norwood hitter stepped into the batter's box, Billy cut loose.

Jimmy's strategy worked. Billy Armstrong stood six feet one inch tall, and he had long arms. The pitcher's box on the Lockerbie diamond was elevated somewhat. When Billy whipped the ball down to the plate with his high overhand delivery, the Norwood hitters could not fathom it. As Jimmy had said they would, they thought the ball was coming down from the clouds. Les Moore, squatting low behind the plate, took the ball in his big mitt with a thud that sounded like a bucket dropping in a well.

Billy was somewhat wild, but he had enough control to keep out of trouble through the fourth inning. In the fifth, Norwood began to grow anxious, impatient of the tied score with a despised team. Norwood hitters began swinging, but swung late because they underestimated Billy's speed. In the sixth, they timed better, but swung over the ball, unable to gage its downward angle.

In the seventh Billy grew tired. His arm was not ready for the strenuous strain of pitching. Jimmy

and Les Moore took turns trotting out to remind him to get his arm up high for the overhand delivery. Norwood got two hits in this round, but Billy managed to get a third out on strikes and saved the situation.

Meantime, inning after inning, Lockerbie went to the attack and was turned back. Morton, the Norwood left-hander, was pitching a beautiful game, mixing speed with wide, sharp, breaking curves. Lockerbie and Norwood rooters alike reveled in a struggle that would have done credit to professionals, and the score remained a tie. But in the eighth, both the tie and the strain were broken.

"Get your arm up there, Billy," whispered Jimmy, as he walked out to the field beside the tall chap. "Keep 'at old ball coming down on 'em like a parachute that won't open. Only two more innings."

But Billy was tired and his speed was fading. Moreover, Norwood hitters had found he used only a straight ball. The first hitter stood up and swung. Result, a single to right. The second, a left-handed batter, pulled a bunt down the first base-line which the crippled Tom Willoughby could not reach. Two on.

Jimmy and Les called a conference at the box, and urged Billy to tighten up.

"Give yuh all I got," muttered Billy. "Old arm's like a ton of lead."

He succeeded in fanning the third batter, but the next man cut a hard grounder past shorty Wentworth for a single, filling the bases. Norwood players and fans went wild with joy, and literally turned the field into a riot a moment later when another safe hit off the weary Billy Armstrong drove in two runs. Five to three in favor of Norwood, two on and only one out. While the excitement was at its height, and Lockerbie rooters were giving up all hope, Jimmy asked the

umpire for time out, and ran over to the bench to consult Sandy McGee. Sandy nodded, and Jimmy trotted back on the diamond, motioning to Les Moore to come out to the box as he did so.

"Billy," he announced to Armstrong, "you take third base. Les, I'm going to pitch. Maybe we can get 'em out, and then whittle off some runs in time to save this blamed game."

"I'm all in, but what's the big idea, Jimmy?" asked Armstrong. "Why not call in Smithson. You've never pitched any."

"Maybe so, but I've got something that fits in right here," said Jimmy. "Les, I'm going to use an underhand slow ball. They've been looking at a high fast ball until they've got on to it. Now they can look at one coming up out of the cellar. Let's go."

A few loyal Lockerbie rooters cheered the change, but the Norwood crowd jeered. And some of the Lockerbie subs, rallying around young Smithson, wore expressions that bespoke both disappointment and criticism of Jimmy for trying to play an all-star game himself instead of giving Smithy a chance. But Jimmy once more had the answer to the situation.

Partly because he contorted himself in such manner that he really seemed to bring the ball up out of the basement, partly because it was a slow ball following speed, and partly because the Norwood batters were overanxious in their desire to smash out a decisive victory then and there, Jimmy checked the rally. He got the first batter he faced on a short looping fly down to Shorty Wentworth. And the third out came a second later when a Norwood slugger, trying to kill the ball, hit under it and lofted a sky-scraper that came down to Tom Willoughby's mitt. That ended the rally. Lockerbie rooters cheered and pulled for a similar scoring attack.

The tie and the strain were broken in the first half of the eighth, and now, as events proved, it was the turn of the game itself to be broken up.

"They'll be cocky, and maybe careless," said Jimmy, on the bench. "Billy, see if you can crash the first one. Morton will groove it. He's tired and won't be wasting any."

Billy Armstrong swung at the first ball and connected. The Lockerbie crowd leaped to its feet with a cheer, but the cheer died down as the ball descended into the center-fielder's glove. Jimmy, watching Morton, thought he saw the big left-hander heave a sigh of relief.

"First ball, kid," he whispered to the next hitter, a weak batter filling in as right-fielder. A scratch hit past the Norwood second-baseman resulted. Morton chided his second-sacker for not fielding the ball.

"First ball," Jimmy whispered again, and the next hitter, a stocky youngster playing second for Lockerbie, smashed a solid single over the short-stop's head. Lockerbie stands went into an uproar.

"Tom, he'll try to work on you,—remembers that long double you hit," said Jimmy to long Tom Willoughby. "Wait him out, hey?"

Willoughby nodded, and hobbled up to the plate. He watched the first one, a ball. He watched the second, a strike. He looked at the third, a ball. And then, as the next came speeding up to him he braced and swung with all his might. Crash, and the leather was traveling back, faster and higher than it had come in. With his crippled ankle hampering him, long Tom could only reach second base, but he had driven in two runs and the score was tied up again. Disgruntled, Morton walked the next hitter, and then the Norwood infield drew in somewhat.

Noting the move, Jimmy turned to Sandy McGee,

"Sandy, they'll try for a double play, when we've got the winning run on second base. Listen, will you back me up?"

"Sure," said Sandy.

"Here, kid," said Jimmy to the ninth man in the batting order, "will you do something for me? For Lockerbie?"

"What?" said the hitter, the weakest batter on the team.

"I want you to go up there and deliberately strike out," ordered Jimmy. "Don't touch the ball, see?"

"That's a dickens of a thing, with two on,—gotta win this game——"

"Sure thing, I know, but you do that, kid."

"Whiff, son," spoke up Sandy, beginning to get a glimmering of Jimmy's idea.

The boy went up to the plate and, per orders, struck aimlessly at three successive balls.

"Now then, Shorty," called Jimmy to Wentworth, "it's up to you. Wait till I get Smithson down on second to run for Tom."

He hastily dispatched the wondering Smithy to replace crippled Tom Willoughby on the base-lines, and then turned to Sandy. "I'd rather put it up to Shorty, with two out, than take a chance on a double play with this other boy up and only one down," he said.

"I get yuh," Sandy replied. "May prove a smart play."

Shorty Wentworth, with the crowd demanding a hit, waited Lefty Morton to the end of the string, refusing to hit at bad balls, and taking two strikes without moving his bat. But with the count two and three, and a groover coming up, he swung. He drove a hard grounder to the short-stop, but so far to the right and so deep beyond the base-line that the short-stop could

not make a play for him at first, nor get either Smithson at third or the man at second.

"Gosh, I thought it was going to work," groaned Jimmy. "Three inches more and Shorty's hit would have gone through and we'd have that old lead back again."

"You can bring 'em in," urged Sandy McGee. "Go up and crash it."

Grasping his bat, Jimmy trudged out to the plate with a determined air. The Norwood infield was playing deep, he noted. They expected him to swing, in an effort to drive in one run or more, and they were far back laying for a hit. He had bunted twice, successfully, and this was no place for a bunt, Jimmy thought as he watched Morton's first effort, a ball, swish past him. One run would—— Suddenly resolute, he stepped out of the box, looked at Smithson on the third base-line, and at Billy Armstrong, coaching. He signaled for the squeeze play.

Then he stepped back into the box, shouldered his bat and spread himself out as if he intended trying to hit a home run. Morton received his catcher's signal, hastily glanced at the runners, and then swung into action with a fast ball. Jimmy quickly shifted his feet, drew down his bat, and tapped the ball for a slow roller toward third base, catching the infielders and Morton himself flatfooted. But not young Smithson, who came sprinting over the plate with a run,—the winning run, for only one other thing happened in the game.

With a one-run lead to hold, Jimmy sent Smithson to third base, Armstrong back to first, and himself essayed to pitch. His underhand slow ball got the first man, and the second, both on pop flies. But the third hitter was the husky Morton, swinging from the left side of the plate. Thoroughly disgusted at seeing

the game twice snatched out of his fist, Morton wanted to knock the cover off the ball, but he was canny enough to take things easy. He watched two of Jimmy's underhand cellar balls, and then he leaned against one with a smash that sent it far into left center. When the ball came back to the infield, Morton was laughing on third base.

In this crisis, with the tying run only a few steps from home, Jimmy watched the Norwood bench. In a moment the hitter appeared, but he was not a member of the regular batting order. Jimmy eyed him until he was in the batter's box, standing on the left-hand side. Then Jimmy promptly signaled the umpire for time out, and motioned Smithson to take the box.

"He's your kind of meat, kid," he whispered to Smithson as the little southpaw took the ball. Over at third base, where the husky Morton was grinning at him in sarcasm, Jimmy grinned back, and said, "There are several people I can't pitch to, and most of them are left-handed hitters."

As he spoke, Smithson wound up and shot a strike at the pinch hitter, who swung mightily but merely topped the ball for an easy bounder down to Smithy, who tossed it to Billy Armstrong for the third out, and the game. Lockerbie had won, and Lockerbie rooters carried Jimmy Byers and three other Lockerbie seniors off the field on their shoulders.

Back in the dressing-room again, the baseball squad was uproarious.

"He even ordered me to fan, there in the eighth," yelled the martyr hitter.

"Used a first-baseman with a high ball," laughed Les Moore.

"And a third-sacker with a low ball," added Billy.

"Used a left-hander with *one* ball——" chimed in Smithson.

"Yeah, but what he used most was that old bean," shouted long Tom Willoughby.

"Say, you guys, listen," said Jimmy Byers flushing. "I want you to watch two big fish apologize to Sandy McGee for laughing at him when he said——"

"Give 'em everything yuh got," yelled Les, falling on Sandy's neck.

"And if yuh haven't got everything, give 'em everything yuh *have* got," said Billy grasping one of Sandy's hands.

"The idea is this," growled Sandy, when he could free himself from the rough apologizers, "if yuh spread everything yuh *have* got around enough, yuh can make it *look* like everything, and make the other guy fall for it, and like it."

CHAPTER VII

JIMMY COME JIM

"ADAMS," said Colonel Wagner, while going through his mail one May morning, "will you send for Byers before taking this dictation?"

When Adams returned, Colonel Wagner took up his correspondence.

"Let me give you a letter to William J. Armstrong, President, Universal Metal Corporation, New York City.

"Dear Mr. Armstrong:

"Thank you for your letter returning the copy of that review of the book on railroad organization. I am glad to know you found it so interesting that you have purchased the book. You will be interested in knowing that this review was written by young Jimmy Byers. He is the youngster whose sportsmanlike example put your son, Billy, on the right track. You doubtless recall the boxing-match. I told you how, through Byers, Billy learned something of discipline and team-work. There is a new development.

"Billy is the best ice hockey player we have. He took up the idea of team-work, expounded by Jimmy Byers, and worked to fit himself into team-play, giving every man a chance to distinguish himself. The team fell flat. Then, in a game in which our team was outclassed, young Byers came through with an inspiration. Team-play, he said, consisted not merely of working together so that every man had his chance. Team-play consists of taking the team's best point and sharpening that point. Therefore, he said, the whole team should revise its game to feed the puck to Billy, and make him win the game. Billy rebelled.

Not team-work, he said. Jimmy and the others insisted, and made Billy carry on. They rallied and won, with Billy playing wonderful hockey.

"This boy, Jimmy, is the son of an army major, an old friend of mine, stationed in the Philippines. He has no family, except this boy, and he has only his army salary. The boy does not wish to try for West Point, and I am trying to land him a scholarship. I have sent this review of the railroad book to the dean of the school of commerce at Jordan University, in the hope that the dean will be interested, and find him a scholarship."

Finishing, Colonel Wagner leaned back in his chair and turned to look out the window. Whether he was studying signs of spring on the Lockerbie campus, or meditating over the suggestion for action on the part of Mr. Armstrong in his letter, can not be told.

His assistant answered a call at the door, and opened it to announce Jimmy Byers. The boy, with a straightforward look in his eyes, advanced to the Colonel's desk.

"Sit down, Jimmy," said the Colonel. "I want to talk to you."

"Yes, sir," Jimmy replied, taking a chair beside the desk.

"I have reread that review you wrote," said the Colonel, "and like it very much. You evidently got out of the book what there was in it. Now then, I'd better tell you what I've done.

"I've written the dean of Jordan University, inquiring about scholarships. He is at the head of the school of commerce. You seem to have a liking for commercial affairs, and I'm glad to see it. I do not know whether we can get you a scholarship, but there is no harm trying. How would you feel about it?"

"All right," said Jimmy. "It's nice of you to go

to so much trouble, sir, and I appreciate it. If I could land a scholarship, I'd work my head off to make good."

"No doubt about that," laughed the Colonel. "Fact, I'm afraid you'd work *too* hard. I've never seen you do anything easily, even play."

"Well, maybe so," Jimmy flushed. "But then Dad always said if you wanted to do anything at all, do it your best and hardest."

"What word have you from the Major?" the Colonel asked.

"Bad news, and I'm worried," said Jimmy. "Had a letter this morning that bothers me. I'm afraid something's happened to him."

"What does the letter say?" queried the Colonel. "Let's not worry too soon."

"You might read it, sir," and Jimmy handed the letter to Colonel Wagner.

"Dear Jim," he read half aloud, "I can write only a short note, because I'm still in hospital. Something wrong with my stomach, and the medico says I'll have to be operated on. It's nothing serious, and I'll be all right before long. But if anything happens, you'll go right along and be the good, hard-hitting, square-shooting man I know you're going to be. I'll write again for the next mail, and hope to tell you I'm on the mend. Enclosed is a check. Remember me to Colonel Wagner. Your old daddy."

"You see," said Jimmy.

"Why, boy, that's nothing to worry about," smiled the Colonel. "Naturally, before an operation, he'd send such a message. But he says it is nothing serious."

"I know he does," Jimmy agreed.

"Well, then——"

"But I think he said that to cheer me up," Jimmy insisted.

"What makes you think so?" asked Colonel Wagner.

"You won't think I'm—well, sort of childish?" Jimmy asked. "It's this,—he calls me 'Jim,' where he always called me 'Jimmy.' And he signs himself 'daddy' instead of 'dad.' I don't know how to explain it, sir. Sounds foolish. But it's like he wants to make me the man, and himself the one that needs somebody to lean on, and,—you understand, sir, don't you?"

"I think I do, Jim," replied the Colonel gravely. He rose, stepped around his desk, and placed a hand on the boy's shoulder. "The Major knows you can be the man, Jim, and so do I. But it has not come to that, so let's not worry. The next mail will bring good news."

"I can't thank you enough, sir," said Jimmy, rising. "Don't like to be so much bother, but I'm certainly grateful. Dad will be, too, when I tell him."

"Give him my regards, and good-by," said Colonel Wagner.

When Jimmy left the room, Colonel Wagner resumed his seat and once more gazed out the window. Finally, he blew his nose, adjusted his glasses and resumed his dictation.

With examination at hand, Lockerbie was a busy place. Sports activities were suspended and all the boys dug into their books. Jimmy put all his time on his work. Les, finding him absorbed, sought out Billy Armstrong. One evening about two weeks after Jimmy had been called to the Colonel's office, Les and Billy came in together. Jimmy had just mailed a letter to his father.

"Say, Jimmy," said Billy, as Les closed the door, "work will be done day after to-morrow. We'll all be

pulling out, and we, Les and I, don't want to leave you here. He'll go to my house to visit. What do *you* say?"

"Oh, listen, Billy, I don't want to be unsociable," began Jimmy.

"That stuff's all bunk," Billy interrupted.

"But I oughtn't go," said Jimmy. "I'm waiting for a letter from Dad. He's just been operated on, out in the Philippines, and if I went it would seem like leavin' him in the hole."

"Is it anything serious?" asked Billy. "Your mail could be forwarded," he urged. "Get it the next day. And besides, aw, shoot, you're not going to get any bad news."

"I'd better not go, Billy," said Jimmy finally. "Much obliged, anyhow. Awful nice of you to ask me."

Just then they heard a rapping at the door, and Les answered it by telling the knocker to enter. Another cadet came in.

"Colonel Wagner would like to see Byers and Moore," he said.

"You guys been up to something?" began Billy. But noting that Jimmy looked at Les apprehensively, he switched his tone. "Hope nothing is wrong, Jim."

"Maybe it's only some news about his scholarship idea," suggested Les as they picked up their caps.

Jimmy, feeling a premonition, could only shake his head. As they entered the Colonel's office Les seemed to share Jimmy's apprehension, for he placed a hand under Jimmy's arm as they walked in side by side. The Colonel rose from his chair, seeming even more grave than usual.

"Sit down, boys," he said. "Moore, I had to see Jim, and I thought perhaps you might not mind coming along."

"I was glad to come, sir," Les replied.

"I have some news," resumed the Colonel.

"Anything about the scholarship?" asked Les hopefully.

"Yes, but first, there's a letter from the Philippines," the Colonel explained.

"Is it what I was afraid of?" asked Jimmy, sitting forward in his chair.

"Yes, and I'm sorry, Jim," said the Colonel, in a gentle voice.

Jimmy stared at the Colonel for an instant, and then slumped back. Oddly enough, he thought of the Colonel calling him Jim, now, as his dad had done. Then he was conscious of Les at his side, the big fellow perching on his chair and slipping his arm around Jimmy's shoulder.

"What does the letter say, sir?" asked Jimmy, taking a shuddering breath.

"The operation was more serious than your dad admitted in his letter, Jim," said the Colonel. "The Major failed to rally. My instructions were to notify you, to say all arrangements have been made, that you will have everything the Major's family is entitled to from the army. The details will come later, and we can talk another time, Jim."

"Yes, sir," replied Jimmy absently.

"Don't you, a—hum—uh—want to cry?" asked the Colonel awkwardly. "Don't hold back, Jim, on my account. I know how you feel." Colonel Wagner, with all the sympathy in the world, was undertaking a new duty for him. He had comforted strong men, but this was the first time he had undertaken to console a boy.

"Oh, no, sir," said Jimmy. "You see, I sort of expected it. I—I kind of prepared. Dad made me think it. But it's hard to get used to the thought."

"I know it is, Jim," the Colonel agreed. He rose from his seat, and walked to Jimmy's chair. A hand on Jimmy's shoulder, he continued: "But you can carry on like a man. Your dad, the Major, knew you would, Jim."

To this Jimmy said nothing, looking into the fire at the smoldering small logs. Les Moore still sat on the side of his chair, and held his arm about Jimmy's shoulders. The Colonel resumed his place by the fireside.

After a long pause during which all three, the two boys and the elderly Colonel, sat ill at ease, Colonel Wagner spoke again.

"I am awfully sorry, Jim," he said, "that if the Major had to be taken, he could not have lived to hear the good news. I am sure he would have been as much pleased as you will be when I tell you what I have to tell."

"What is that, sir?" asked Jimmy dully, if respectfully. He could not take his mind away from the news from the Philippines.

"A letter from the dean of Jordan University today," exclaimed the Colonel, leaning forward with pride and gratification in his expression. "Says that he has a scholarship for you, next fall!"

"What's that, sir?" asked Jimmy, unable to believe the statement.

"He has a scholarship, paying practically all your university expenses, that he can award to you if you will signify your willingness to accept it and use it beginning next fall," explained Colonel Wagner. "It covers their full course in commerce, and permits you to specialize in railroads, manufacturing or merchandising!"

"But I don't understand why——" Jimmy began to protest.

"That railroad history review you wrote won it for you," said the Colonel. "I was proud of that piece of work, and I'm proud that the scholarship is there for you. It is the first thing of the kind that has ever come to a Lockerbie boy. If only your dad could know about it——"

"I don't know whether Dad would want me to take it or not," Jimmy interposed when Colonel Wagner paused. Except for the fact that the boy was still struggling to control himself, it might have been said that he wore a stubborn, even a sullen air. "My dad wouldn't want me to take charity, and I wouldn't take it myself, either."

"That's a heck of a way to look at it," spoke up Les Moore bruskiy. "Let somebody offer *me* a scholarship, and see how quick I take it."

"Nobody's offered you one," laughed the Colonel.

"And I guess nobody will, either, the way I've been studying," grinned Les, in embarrassment. "But if they did, I'd sure grab it, whether my folks could afford to send me or not."

"Well, there's no hurry about this thing, Jim," said Colonel Wagner. "You think it over. I believe it is a wonderful opportunity, and I feel that you are entitled to it. Take your time, Jim. Think it over to-night and to-morrow, and then we can talk about it again."

"I will, sir," said Jimmy, rising from his seat. "I didn't mean to seem ungrateful, sir, but I—I don't quite understand it. I'll try to look at it right——"

"I knew you would. That's fine," exclaimed the Colonel, also rising, and striding across the room to take Jimmy's hand. "Let's not worry about it. And Jim, we must try to accept the news from the Philippines bravely. What is to be, will be, you know. Come in and see me whenever you can, Jim. Good-by, Moore."

"Good-by, sir," said Les, and the two boys went out.

Sturdy, slow-thinking Les Moore worried as to the best way to comfort Jimmy and make him forget his sorrow. Awkward and ill at ease, he finally stumbled on the best possible way to take Jimmy's mind off his trouble. He started a conversation about the offer of a scholarship.

"The way I look at it," he announced positively, "you'd be a big fish not to take that scholarship."

"Yeah, and I'd be a fish to bite on it, too," retorted Jimmy.

"How'd you get that way?" Les demanded.

"Well, where do these scholarships come from?" Jimmy countered. "Some rich guy has more money than he knows what to do with, so he gives a bunch of it to some college. And the college gives it to a bunch of guys that can't afford to go to school on their own hook."

"Some guy that's heavy enough in the bean to deserve it——" began Les.

"Some guy that's willing to be a beggar, and take charity, and no questions asked," Jimmy continued. "Never mind how the rich bird got his jack,—whether he stole it, or what. Go ahead and take his scholarship, hey? Well, not for me!"

And that evening, after dinner, the discussion continued. Billy Armstrong dropped into their room, and became involved in a three-way argument which, if it did not sound as scholarly or as refined as it might, at least displayed some highly interesting types of humanity and human thought.

"Any time anybody wants to give *me* something for nothing," proclaimed Billy, "I'll be right there to receive it."

"Yeah, and any time you get something for nothing, you'll find out it costs you a whole lot more than nothing," Jimmy retorted.

"Well, here, listen to me, will you?" demanded Les Moore, sprawled lazily on his bed. "You take Billy Armstrong, now. He's a friend of yours, Jimmy. Suppose his old man should offer you the money to go to college on. He won't miss the dough, and you can use it. Would you take it from him, as a loan or a gift?"

"Certainly not," said Jimmy firmly. "He has no reason to want to give or lend me money. He doesn't know whether I can ever pay him back. He doesn't know what use I'd make of it. So it would be like giving a beggar an old hat, and I'm no beggar. I'll make my own way, even if I don't get as far as I would with somebody shoving me."

"Suppose my dad gave this university a fund, and the university offered the scholarship out of it," began Billy Armstrong.

"Same thing," snapped Jimmy. "You guys give me a pain. Why don't you move me into the poor-house, and be done with it?"

The argument broke up in laughter at this sally, but Jimmy, tormented by the feeling of loneliness that followed word of his father's death, was deadly serious. He wished Billy would go to his own room, and that Les would shut up. All he wanted was to be left alone, with the lights turned out, so that he could think. If he had been able to think collectedly he might have wondered whether there was a hint of fact in Billy's supposition that Mr. Armstrong might have created the scholarship at Jordan.

Early next morning, after Jimmy Byers had spent a sleepless and lonely night tossing in his bed, his problem once more came up for solution and demanded an answer. What should he do? With Major Byers gone, and the support from his salary cut down to a pension, it seemed that his best move was to seek a job. But

what job, and where? What sort of work could he do to earn a living? It was the day before commencement, and on the morrow Jimmy would be graduated from Lockerbie. "Commencement," mused Jimmy, before piling out of bed, "but where do I begin?" Grinning at his own wry joke, he hustled out of the room in his bathrobe and down the corridor to the showers.

A few minutes later, tingling with reaction from the cold water, he ran back into the room intent on jerking big Les Moore out of bed, but to his surprise he found Les sitting up sleepily, and trying to talk to two visitors. One of them was Billy Armstrong, and the other was a tall spare man of middle age, unmistakably Billy's father. "But how would he be here this time of day?" Jimmy wondered.

"Hey, Jim, want you to meet my dad," said Billy. "Father, this is Jim Byers."

"I hope you'll excuse us for not being dressed," said Jimmy, grinning in embarrassment, as he offered a hand to Mr. Armstrong. "C'mon, Les, snap into it."

"Oh, that's all right, I had to pull Billy out of bed myself," smiled the older man. "Sorry to run in on you boys this time of day, but I started driving up here yesterday afternoon from New York and couldn't make it. I stopped down the valley at a hotel about twenty miles from here, and then got up and drove the rest of the way this morning. Wanted to eat breakfast with you fellows, if you'd ask me."

"Sure thing," said Jimmy. "Glad to have you. I'll be dressed in a minute, and it won't take Les more than half an hour." So saying, he threw his cold wet wash-cloth in his buddy's face and dodged into a closet. Les shook his head, grinned and hurried out to the showers. Both boys were dressed in their natty cadet uniforms within ten minutes, Les catching up with

Jimmy, because Jimmy's thoughts were not on speed. He was wondering what kind of rich man it was that could get up at four o'clock in the morning and drive twenty miles before breakfast.

After they had eaten in the common dining-room, the four went out for a stroll over the campus, Billy being anxious to show his father all the sights around Lockerbie Hall. He pointed out the gymnasium, and Mr. Armstrong smiled as he remembered the night he had stolen into the gym to see Billy and Jimmy Byers fight their battle with boxing-gloves. But he did not tell Billy he had been inside the gymnasium.

"Are you fellows busy this morning?" asked Mr. Armstrong presently.

"No, sir, classes are finished," said Jimmy.

"Drill at eleven o'clock," added Les Moore.

"Then I wonder if you'd mind going with me to see Colonel Wagner for a little while?" asked Mr. Armstrong.

"Sure, we'll go with you," said Les, "if you like." Jimmy merely nodded. Mention of the Colonel turned his thoughts back to his last visit to Colonel Wagner's office, the letter from the Philippines, and the offer of the scholarship, and he was plunged again into a jumble of emotions. He felt tortured and driven by events, and yearned for some relief, but oddly enough found some comfort in a sudden liking for Billy's father.

"He's a real guy," Jimmy thought, as he walked along with Les behind Billy and Mr. Armstrong. He noticed the older man's square shoulders and thin frame, the wrinkled, tanned skin of his neck. "Never had a massage in his life, I'll bet," Jimmy mused. Got up early in the morning. Drove his own car. Was not fat. And yet, he remembered, Billy Armstrong had certainly acted like a rich man's spoiled child.

Colonel Wagner greeted them with manifest pleasure, welcoming Mr. Armstrong and laughing at his story of his own early rising in order to be with the boys, and then finding two of them still abed.

"I can guess which one was up and about," smiled the Colonel, looking at Jimmy.

"Didn't sleep very well, sir, so I just got up earlier than usual," Jimmy explained.

"Well, I can understand that," Colonel Wagner replied. "I wonder that you slept at all, and I've got an idea about it, Jim. Do you mind talking it over again? My notion is that you won't be happy until you've figured this thing out, so let's see if we can't reach some plan. Mr. Armstrong might be interested, and I know he could give us some good advice."

"I'm very free with advice," laughed Mr. Armstrong, "although I never took any in my life. Always was stubborn, that way."

"What do you say we sit down out here on the steps?" suggested the Colonel. "It's too pleasant outdoors to be in the house. Now then," as they found seats for themselves, "Mr. Armstrong, to tell you the story: Major Byers, an old friend of mine, and Jim's father, failed to recover from an operation, and we got the news from the Philippines yesterday. Jim had been rather expecting it, because he read between the lines of his father's last letter."

Jimmy, looking out across the campus, remembered how his father had called him Jim, and noted that Colonel Wagner now continually referred to him as Jim instead of Jimmy. He felt a strong lean hand on his shoulder, and knew it was that of Mr. Armstrong, who was sitting on the step above him.

"Now, before Jim had a chance to wonder what he would do, since Major Byers, like many an army officer, had little to leave," explained the Colonel, "we

got word that Jordan University will award Jim a scholarship if he will accept it. This scholarship provides he will receive practically all his expenses, if he will enroll in the school of commerce, and specialize in some one subject. I'm anxious for him to accept it, because the offer is an honor to him and to Lockerbie, and because I'd like to know his plans are settled before he leaves here. But Jim can't quite make up his mind. Is that about the way of it, Jim?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jimmy, "except for one thing,—I *did* make up my mind not to take the scholarship."

"What? Not take it?" echoed Mr. Armstrong. "Why not?"

"Oh, there's no use bothering you with my troubles, and you wouldn't be interested," protested Jimmy.

"But I am interested, several ways," exclaimed Mr. Armstrong, with a nod to Colonel Wagner indicating he wished to try his hand at settling the situation. "In the first place, you're a friend of Billy, and Billy's my boy. In the second place, the Colonel sent me your review of that railroad book, and I liked it so well I bought the book and read it. Now then,—let me get this all straight. I never sell a thing without making sure the buyer knows what he is getting, understand? That's the only honest way to do business.

"I know your story, and here's mine. I used to have all kinds of trouble with railroads in my business, because I didn't understand them. Once I got so mad at a railroad I lit in and built one for myself to do the work I wanted that other road to do. Then I found out, as a railroader myself, what the other road was up against trying to give my business some service. When I read this book, I thought if every business man could know railroads as this writer does, business and the railroads would both be a lot better off. The man that wrote it has done a big thing."

Jimmy, listening intently at the magnate's rapid-fire flow of words, picked up a growing interest in the man as well as the story he told.

"So I found out who the man is," continued Mr. Armstrong. "He is the dean of the school of commerce at Jordan University. And I sat right down and wrote, or dictated, a letter to him. And I told him what I'd got out of his book, and that I'd like to help him get a position where he could write more such books, or turn out young fellows who can, youngsters that know what the business world is, and understand it, see?"

"He wrote back that the best thing I could do would be to establish some scholarships for young fellows interested in this line of work, and here we are, right back where we started, on Lockerbie campus," and Mr. Armstrong paused, smiling, to get his breath.

"But I hope you didn't ask him for one for *me*," said Jimmy, flushing.

"No, sir, that would be Indian giving," Mr. Armstrong resumed. "I told him I could afford to establish three such scholarships, and then I told him, too, how I happened to be interested."

"I sent him a copy of your book review, Jim, you remember," spoke up Colonel Wagner.

"Gosh, playing basketball, hockey, baseball,—where'd you get time to read an extra book, I'd like to know," muttered Billy Armstrong.

Les Moore grunted.

"That's the whole story," concluded Mr. Armstrong, ignoring Billy's remark. "You can see, after all, I *am* interested. And I'm going to be very much disappointed if you don't take that scholarship."

"What do you say, Jim?" asked Colonel Wagner.

"Well, I don't know, exactly," said Jimmy slowly. "It's pretty much of a problem, sir. I think it's won-

derful of Mr. Armstrong to do this, and I don't want to be an ingrate, sir. But don't you see, I can't take it? It's a lot harder to receive, than it is to give, Mr. Armstrong. I'm not a beggar. I can stand on my own feet——"

"That's just the point," exclaimed Mr. Armstrong, interrupting. "The strong fellows are just as much entitled to encouragement as the weak ones. Or more so."

"And then, my dad wouldn't want me to accept something for nothing——"

"Jim, let me say something right here, will you?" asked Colonel Wagner. "I knew your father. He did the same thing I did. He accepted a military education, because he thought he could repay the government in service. And he more than repaid. You have earned this chance, and you can——"

"Pay me back by going into the business world with the understanding I could have used very handily when I started out," interrupted Mr. Armstrong. "And pay back the dean and the university, in the same way. Don't you see? It's not a case of a beggar, or something for nothing, by any means."

"Well, I never thought of it that way,—I mean, as you've just described it," muttered Jimmy Byers uncertainly. "It never occurred to me that Dad looked at it like that. If I could earn this thing——"

"Whoopee!" yelled burly Les Moore. "The poor guy hasn't got a leg to stand on."

"Let him up, he's all bloody," chuckled Billy Armstrong.

Jimmy, unable to vent his emotions in any other way, suddenly knocked off Billy's cap with one hand, and punched Les in the ribs with the other. Then he blushed like a child caught in mischief. Before he could address his elders again, Billy spoke up.

"Hi, Les, where *you* going to college?"

"Jordan." The big chap spoke positively.

"Dad," said Billy, "Mother still wants me to go to Yale or Harvard."

"How many votes for Jordan can we muster?" countered Mr. Armstrong.

"Two," exclaimed Billy joyfully. "Listen, fellows, we can all three——"

"Say, it's five minutes to drill time," said Jimmy. "We've got to beat it."

"Dad, you come over to the dorm for lunch," Billy flung over his shoulder, as the three boys scuttled away. Down the walk they hurried, leaving Mr. Armstrong and Colonel Wagner to watch them out of sight, and smile and nod at each other in appreciative, sympathetic understanding.

"You guys remember what the Lieutenant said on the way home from the hockey game? About *The Three Musketeers*?" asked Jimmy.

"That's——" began Les.

"*Us!*" all three shouted in unison. Then they broke into a run, to reach drill in time.

CHAPTER VIII

FIFTH STEP

THE next step of Jimmy Byers took him up and into Jordan University, a great middle-western institution. It was when he had made this step that Jimmy began to think of the varsity eleven, away up there at the top of a long hard climb. One of the first things he heard when he landed at the university was a lecture by Coach Phillips, of the varsity eleven, and his inspiration for the battle toward a place for himself on the great eleven came from that lecture.

"A football team is just like an army," declared Coach Phillips, winding up his talk on the first day of practise. "The infantry, the artillery, cavalry, air units, supply service, signal corps,—all these work and fight together. The infantry by itself, or the air service, or the quartermaster corps, could not win a war.

"It's the same way in football. No tackle, or quarter-back, or end can win a game. It's been tried, right here at Jordan by some star players, and it has never worked. Any player who thinks he can win games by himself is welcome to get out right now. We'll give his place to somebody who will work and fight with and for the other ten men.

"The old army game is what I want. You fellows, working together, can win our games. All that is needed is for every one of you to fight your own battles, and to lend anybody else in the line-up a hand when he needs some help in fighting his. Team-work is our slogan."

Coach Phillips dismissed the big squad, varsity and

freshman alike, and sent them to the gym. First day's practise had been short, consisting chiefly of limbering up drill, punting and passing the ball. Most of the varsity players and many of the freshman took the workout lightly, but three boys among the freshmen took in every detail with studious interest.

They were Jimmy, Les Moore and Billy Armstrong.

"This old coach," declared Billy, "knows his oil. I'll recite because I've learned the lesson."

"Time the scrubs licked the old varsity with its stars, hey, Bill?" laughed Les, as they entered the freshman quarters.

"With little Poison Ivy here engineering the job," grinned Billy, giving Jim a shove.

"You know, fellows," said Jim, "I think we're going to like this place."

"I do, already," testified Les Moore.

"Got those big eastern schools licked," Billy commented enthusiastically. "And with us three sticking together, we'll not only like it, we'll make it like us."

"Thatta boy," Jim grinned. "Make that old varsity next year."

All three boys developed an early liking and admiration for Coach Phillips. His doctrine sounded very much like the gospel of athletics expounded at Lockerbie, and he seemed to be a clean and decent chap.

But in thinking of him, and observing the way in which he handled his squad, the boys were looking ahead. Their present coach seemed to be a different type. John Masterson, freshman coach, was a big burly fellow who had starred as a lineman at Jordan for three years and was now, his first year out of school, taking up the coaching profession. The squad, of which Jim, Les and Billy formed a part, constituted his first class in football. He appeared to be hasty of temper, resentful of interference, and harsh with his

boys, but these faults may have been aggravated by the nature of his task.

The freshman squad, about forty-five in number, was a conglomerate mixture. A few of them, as the Lockerbie boys, had played football under good coaching. Some of the rest were big strong fellows from the farm or the city who had played little football and knew only the simplest rudiments. Most of them were boys of average size and little to commend them to the coach except ambition. They came from the North, South, East and West. They were big boys, little boys, fat boys, tall boys and short boys. Country boys, Italian boys, a Pole or two, some Irish lads, and several variations of plain Americans. Chicago boys——

"Cake-eaters," growled Les Moore, thinking of two well-dressed fellows trying for half-back.

Masterson faced the task of welding all these into a compact, workable squad. That done, he had to teach them enough football to make them worth-while material for future varsity elevens. Anybody viewing the squad the first day would have testified that Masterson faced a tough assignment.

The second day out, he divided the squad into three groups, separating the backs, ends and linemen. This done, he set them to work going through preliminaries suited to each of the three classifications. Les Moore and Jim Byers toiled and sweated with the other backs, and Billy Armstrong chased his long lean frame up and down the field with the other ends. All three were in prime condition, because they had spent the summer doing manual labor on a power project in the Colorado mining district dominated by Billy's father. The workout seemed easy to them.

"But I'll tell you one thing, Les," said Jim that night, as they sat together in a two-room apartment

they had taken, "you and I are going to have to make a change, right here and now. Old Billy, there, is all set. He has the reach and the speed to get by as an end, if he'll just build up over one hundred and seventy pounds. But I weighed only one hundred and sixty-one when we got through this afternoon, and you weighed one hundred and seventy-four. I'm too little to have much chance as a half-back, and you're not heavy enough to play full."

"You're crazy," interrupted Billy Armstrong. "You're as big as most of the other guys trying out."

"I'm thinking about next year," said Jim. "We could make the freshman team, I think, but where would that get us next year? Half-backs under one hundred and seventy pounds have to be world beaters against the big teams Jordan plays; but one hundred and sixty or one hundred and sixty-five pound quarter-backs can get by."

"Well, I ought to weigh a little more by next season," Les replied.

"Yes, but a one hundred and seventy-five pound half-back has a better chance than a one hundred and seventy-five pound full-back," Jim argued. "And you know it. You're fast enough to play half! And anyway, the only reason you played full at Lockerbie was that you were the biggest back we had."

"He's fast enough on the way to dinner," laughed Billy Armstrong. "If he keeps his speed with the chow, he'll soon be big enough to play guard or tackle."

"I don't notice you hanging back from the table," countered Les. "But, Jim, maybe you're right. Guess I'll tear myself, and try for half."

"And I'll go out for quarter," declared Jim Byers.

"Tough on you guys, having to learn new positions," began Billy.

"While *you* know all about your job at end," growled Les, diving at the lanky chap and dragging him to the floor for one of their rough and tumble scuffles.

Next day Coach Masterson divided the backs into still smaller groups, separating the quarter-, half- and full-backs. After that, he lined up three teams tentatively, ranging them, from what he knew of the respective abilities of the boys, in first, second and third elevens. Billy, because Masterson had noticed he had an aptitude for catching forward passes, drew a position on the makeshift first team; Les, because he stacked up well in weight and size with the other halves, landed on the second eleven, and Byers, of whom Masterson knew nothing, went in at quarter on the third. An old Lockerbie fan might have told him he had the three boys rated in the exact reverse of their worth to an eleven.

Day after day these three elevens, with substitutions from among the left-overs, worked at signals and formations. Jimmy, a natural leader, fitted well into the position of quarter-back, although it was new to him. Moore had football sense, and because he was striving to put on speed, attracted Masterson's attention. He soon went on the first eleven.

"Darn shame," declared Billy Armstrong that night. "Les is all right, and I'll get by, maybe, but here's old Jim, the real football player of the bunch, stuck there on the third team."

"The quarter on this first team is a whiz," began Les. "Had me humping——"

"Yeah, but dumb," growled Billy. "I'm gonna tell this coach something."

"You say anything to him about me, and I'll crown you," threatened Jim. "I'll hoe my own row, and you keep your shovel out."

"Who said anything about you?" demanded Billy. "I'm a diplomat, I am."

The next afternoon, because he had always obtained things for the asking, Billy spoke to the coach. He may have been emboldened by his success on the first eleven.

"Mr. Masterson," he said, "could I say something? It's this, sir. Moore and Byers and I played together at Lockerbie Hall——"

"Yeah? That swell society military school over East?"

"And I just wondered if we wouldn't work together better if we were on the same team, sir?"

"Oh, a little private team-work, hey? Well, suit y'rself. You and Moore go over on the third team, and send the right end and left half over to the first. How's that strike you?" he asked sarcastically.

"Fine, sir," said Billy. He really felt hurt that he and Les should be demoted, when his motive was to urge promotion for Jim, but he took his medicine like a man.

"Tried to tell him how to run his squad, did you?" demanded Jim. "That was a smart piece of work,—I don't think."

But Les Moore merely grinned. He felt more confident, playing with Jim and Billy, than with the eleven made up entirely of strange boys. The third team was a misfit aggregation. Scrimmage revealed them as a sorry lot, for the first and second elevens, although the three boys fought valiantly, walloped them soundly. But the team improved daily, despite the fact that Masterson and his assistant gave most of their attention to the first two elevens. Jim Byers, at quarter, worked like a Trojan, helping the other backs, and encouraging the linemen, most of them green and awkward.

School work was easy for them, because all had been good students at Lockerbie and the freshman course seemed to be largely in the nature of review. They had few other interests, knowing hardly any of the Jordan students. Consequently football absorbed most of their thought. In a short time they established themselves and felt at home.

"High privates in the rear rank," Les retorted, when Billy one evening chummily recalled their old byword, "Three Musketeers."

"But we'll be out in front as sharpshooters one of these days," declared Jim. "I feel it coming."

"Where d'you feel it? Lemme feel it," laughed Billy.

All the while Masterson was laboring with his sweating striving freshmen, Coach Phillips drove and cajoled, whipped and coaxed his varsity squad. More than anything else, he sought team-work. A team without any stars can whip the world, he declared day after day, provided it works and fights together. Jordan faced a hard schedule, he said over and over again, and only the most perfect team-work would carry the eleven through it. His problem was complicated by the fact he had six positions open, left vacant by graduating stalwarts of the preceding season's good team. Every man trying for one of these places seemed to be bursting himself to play more football than all the others. Each tried to do an entire team's work, instead of striving to fit himself into the single job open to him.

Perhaps the worst offender was a burly tackle named Hilligoss, a giant standing six feet two, and weighing more than two hundred pounds. A senior, he had subbed two years behind Masterson, an outstanding star of the Middle West at tackle. Determined to win a regular place, he tried to play the whole

game every time Phillips put him in the line-up against the scrubs or the freshmen. He had a world of strength and ability, and proved himself a hard fighter.

"But, Hilly," scolded Phillips repeatedly, "I don't want you to play tackle, and guard, and end *and* defensive half-back. All I want you to do is to play a decent game at tackle."

Hillgoss could not get this idea through his head, and his failure to do so forms the crux of this story. His density, coupled with an unscrupulous temper, brought a climax to the early season careers of Jim Byers, Les Moore and Billy Armstrong, three musketeers. Moreover, his insistence on breaking up the coach's program for team-work placed the varsity on the highroad—but that is another story.

The second Saturday of school brought the first freshman-varsity game, an annual affair which gave the students their first glimpse of the new Jordan eleven and their first opportunity to inspect the incoming freshman football squad. Every year it drew a crowd, preceding as it did the opening game of the schedule, and following ten days of secret practise. Varsity always tried to strut its stuff. Freshmen, appointed for the battle by Masterson, were nervous and alert for opportunities to make good.

No less expectant than the others were Jim Byers, Les and Billy. They speculated as to their chances to break into the struggle, and told one another, over and over, that if they did break in, they'd burst something to show they deserved the chance. None of them knew what was to come, but each dressed and went to the field with the rest of the freshman squad, yearning to break into the battle.

"And if we do get in," chattered Billy, the most excitable of the three, "remember, we stick together."

"Thatta spirit," said Jim.

It is no small adventure for a group of freshmen, gathered from the four winds, strangers to one another and with no natural or chosen leaders, to engage a big varsity football eleven in battle. Any apprehension or nervousness in combat, on the part of the youngsters, is excusable. To the credit of the Jordan freshmen, or rhinies as they are better known, be it said that they fought as best they could.

Masterson started his first team, and in the first period varsity rolled up three touch-downs. Phillips sent in substitutes for the second quarter, and Masterson withdrew his first team, replacing it with the second. The varsity subs added two more touch-downs. In neither period were the rhinies able to advance the ball.

Les, Billy and Jim sat on the bench, amid the crowd surrounding Masterson, and alternately criticized their own freshmen's play and wished they were in the game. Starting the third period, Masterson ordered out the third team, to provide fresh opposition to the original varsity first line-up, reentering the contest.

"Let's go, gang," yelled Jim. "C'mon, here's our chance!"

He led the third-string rhinies out on the field, and was told by Coach Phillips, refereeing, that the freshmen should kick off.

"All right, Les, boot 'er a mile," shouted Jim. "Everybody down under this one. Nail the man with the ball."

Les placed the ball, saw his men lined up, and then booted. Instead of getting it away squarely, however, he sliced his kick, and the ball curved off to one side, to bounce and roll into the hands of the burly Hilligoss. Jimmy, lining up with the forwards to go down the field, leaving Les to play safety, was down the

field fast, heading directly for the big tackle. He saw Hilligoss stooping to snatch the ball off the grass, and left his feet in a long diving tackle. He hit the big fellow just as Hilligoss straightened up and started to run.

Hilligoss, off balance and overanxious to make a good showing, first sprawled under the impact of the hard tackle, and then fumbled the ball. It rolled into Billy's path and that youngster, alert, scooped it up to run ten yards before he was dragged down. The crowd cheered the freshmen, and razed the varsity.

"Let's go, gang," yelled Jim Byers, whipping his men into position. "Four—eleven—forty-four—seven," he barked a signal. The back field shifted. Jimmy went back, and Les Moore, playing right half, took a position in front and to his right. Billy, playing right end, was close in on this formation, to take the varsity left tackle in. The varsity left tackle was the hulking Hilligoss.

"I'll get you guys for that," growled Hilligoss. "Send one in here, and watch me smear it."

He did not know the freshman signals, but the play was a shot off tackle, just outside him. Jimmy carried the ball, and, when it came back to him from center, darted forward sharply. Hilligoss, mad clear through, charged hard and fast. His two hundred pounds, well managed and driven by anger, flung the freshman right tackle aside, swung past Billy before the lanky end could block, crashed into Les Moore and finally toppled down on the hapless Jimmy, just getting under way.

Jimmy kept his feet driving, but the impact of the charge made by Hilligoss was too much. The big tackle bore him down, grunting and swearing angrily. As he hit, he saw it was Jimmy, who had caused him to fumble a moment before. Losing his temper com-

pletely, he tried to smash the ball out of Jim's hands, and at the same time drove a knee hard into Jimmy's stomach. Knocked breathless, and hurt all through, Jim managed to cling to the ball.

"Second down, freshmen, twelve to go," called Phillips.

"C'mon, gang," panted Jimmy. He looked appealingly at Billy, and then at Les. Billy shook his head, bewildered. Then he jumped back of the line for an instant, before Jim could call a signal.

"Time out," called Jim, looking at the referee, who nodded.

"Here, Billy,——" he began.

"Why didn't you swing on that big tramp?" demanded Billy. "He roughed——"

"Beat him with football," muttered Jim. "Les, you hit him low, and Billy, take him high. This right tackle of ours can't stop him. You guys hit him, and I'll run that same play again."

"I'll hit him," declared Les.

"He was gone before I got him, other time," panted Billy. "Take him in a mile a minute, this time."

Coach Phillips, wily in the ways of football, must have known what was coming, for he smiled as Jimmy signaled he was ready for play.

"Four—eleven—forty-four," yelled Jim again.

"Another at me?" roared Hilligoss. "Bring it on, I'll smack——"

But he did not finish the sentence. Jimmy called the ball back as he yelled, hesitated just a fraction of a second, and then shot forward, outside tackle. Billy Armstrong, sick because he had failed to hit Hilligoss in time on the first play, drove into the big tackle in a fury. At the same instant, Les Moore, hurling his one hundred and seventy-five pounds with all his speed at the big fellow's knees, crashed him hard. Result,

the burly Hilligoss went rolling and smashing to the ground, in toward center and back out of the line, with Les and Billy atop him.

Jimmy, anticipating the hole, flashed through it for a gain of fourteen yards before he was cut down by the varsity defensive quarter. The big crowd gave him a rousing cheer, not seeing the team-play that made the gain possible. But Coach Phillips, who had sensed Jimmy's move with the aid of Les and Billy, chuckled in appreciation. And Coach Masterson, of the freshmen, sitting on the side-lines talking football to his squad as the game progressed, also grinned. He wondered whether he might not have a quarter-back in this boy Byers.

"On our way, gang," yelled Jim, as the stack-up untangled.

"First down, freshmen," Phillips called.

"Try me again," shouted Hilligoss, angry and disgusted. He did not realize the play had been planned. He jumped into position and glared hotly at the rhiny backs.

"All right," Jimmy retorted. And once more yelled the same signal. However, this time, he shoved Les back, and himself took the bigger boy's position. He winked at Billy, and nodded as Billy glanced quickly toward Hilligoss.

Back went the ball to Les Moore. Jimmy flew at big Hilligoss, fairly diving over his own tackle to reach the varsity man. At the same time, Billy again cracked the big fellow from the side. Les Moore, running low and sturdily, crashed through the hole, picked up speed, veered outward to avoid the varsity defensive quarter, and then dashed straight down the field for a touch-down. Hilligoss, brushing Jimmy and Billy aside bruskiy, was just getting to his feet as Coach Phillips blew his whistle to stop play after the score.

"I'll get you fresh guys for that," he growled at the two boys.

But neither Jimmy nor Billy heard him, in the uproar from the crowd. Besides, both had clambered to their feet and were running down the field to take part in the point after touch-down play. Jimmy held the ball for a place kick, and Billy booted it over.

"That's all for to-day," yelled Phillips, as the two teams started to line up again. "Game's over. Varsity, stay here. Freshmen, report to your coach. You, young fellow," nodding to Jimmy Byers, "ask your coach to come here a moment."

Wondering what was up, the varsity slowly gathered around the coach. The freshmen straggled off the field while Jimmy, at a trot, went over to Masterson and gave him the message of the head coach.

"Nice work, boy," commented Masterson.

"Other guys did it," said Jim.

"You engineered it," said the coach. "You fellows kick the ball around till I come back," and he went to report to Phillips. When he reached the group of which the head coach was the center, he heard Phillips laying down the law.

"Men," said Phillips, "this thing that has just happened will either make or break our season. Hilligoss, it will teach you a lesson, or we'll get a new left tackle. Now then, what happened? I've talked to you about team-play until I'm black in the face."

"I didn't think I'd fumble that kick-off," muttered Hilligoss.

"Not talking about that,—anybody may fumble when hit as hard and clean as that kid hit you," snapped Phillips. "But here, after all I've said about a football team being an army,—infantry, artillery, cavalry and so forth, and every man with one job to do first, above all others,—what happened? Hilly on

that first play, outcharged his man, ran over the interference, hit the runner, threw him, tried to knock the ball out of his hands, and then gave him a dirty knee. Oh,"—and he held up a hand as Hilligoss began a denial,—“I was on top of the play. I saw it. I suppose, Hilly, if you'd knocked the ball loose, and paralyzed the kid, you'd have jumped up, grabbed the leather, and hiked for the goal-line? Hey?” And he paused to glare at the hapless husky.

“What I'm getting at is this,—Hilly tried to play the whole game, although there are ten other men here helping play it. Some of them could have pinned the runner. One of them, whoever has been trying to play left end, could have taken the runner, or smashed the interference. But Hilly tried to do it all, see?

“And then what? We find out we're up against a smart quarter-back, and a bunch of kids come here from all over the country, already welded into a team, see? They believe in team-work. Hilly, you don't know what you did, do you? You smashed that half-back, kneed the quarter and tried to tear the ball away from him. That means that you, and nobody else, gave these freshies a touch-down, after we've scored five times on them, and they haven't made a yard against us. How?

“You invited three rhinies to team against you. Two of them hit you a ton, and a third ran fourteen yards through you, *you* a great big hulk that ought to stop a truck. And then two more of them team on you, fighting together like wildcats, and another runs for a touchdown, right through where you ought to be. But you weren't there. You were sleeping on the job, reading a paper in a rocking-chair. Or might as well have been.

“But I'm much obliged to you, Hilly. You showed our gang first what team-work is *not*, by trying to do

it all. Then you invited these smart rhinies in with some nice team-work. They set us a beautiful example. So you've done us a favor. Now then, Hilly, you just drop out of left tackle for a while to think it over. Tell Brown to come in here, for signal practise. Oh, Masterson," and he turned to the freshman coach, "I wish you'd take those three kids and work 'em into a team with the line you had on your first team. That will make a combination that will give us a workout, a *real* workout, Tuesday and Wednesday."

The downcast Hilligoss trudged away to send in a substitute, and Masterson, chuckling over the turn in events, went back to his freshman squad. Varsity turned in for a grueling signal drill, to prepare for a victory in the first game of the season, the following Saturday. But that is not part of this story.

"Freshmen," announced Masterson to his squad, "we've just seen what team-work will do. Moore did not make that touch-down; neither did Byers, nor Armstrong. The three of them, teaming together, made it. It was nice work. Last year the rhinies did not score on the varsity all season. We've done it in our first game. Team-work did the job. Now then, let's line up for some signal work, and get ready to give varsity a licking before the season ends. Byers, take quarter; Moore, left half; Armstrong, right end; Morgan, full-back——"

Three happy youngsters, all far from home and in strange surroundings, celebrated in their rooms that night. Winners after two weeks of campaigning against odds, they were not far short of being hilarious.

"But Masterson did not tell the whole story of team-work," said Jim Byers, "when he said team-work makes a team."

"What you drivin' at?" the other two demanded.

"Well, team-work also makes the individual."

"Present," snickered Billy Armstrong.

"Here," laughed Les.

"Well, I've made the first team myself," Jimmy added, grinning.

"Hope this big Hilligoss doesn't lose out," began Les.

"Say, don't worry," Jimmy admonished. "Anybody that can hit as hard as that big boy hits, can't be pried off the team with a jimmy."

"Say, but he was, with a Jimmy, 's afternoon," crowed Billy Armstrong.

"And the Jimmy's blame near broken in six pieces, too," Jim groaned. "Gosh, I hurt all over. He'll be back, see if he isn't."

"So will we," declared Les and Billy, in one voice.

CHAPTER IX

STEP NUMBER SIX

"BUT listen, poor fish," argued Billy, "you don't have to rush the women, or give white mule a play, or keep a car, just because the other guys do."

"I know I don't," Jimmy retorted. "And I don't have to live with fellows that put in most of their time doing those things, either."

"Afraid of temptation, old weak-knees?" jeered Billy.

"No, but I don't have to join a fraternity when there's no point to it," said Jimmy. "Friendship is the great thing about a fraternity, as I get it. Well, I've got you and Les, and you're my kind of guys. If we three join the Beta Phis, you'll be the only ones of my kind in the crowd, see? So why join then, when we're already together?"

"Well, they're the class of this college," growled Billy.

"Socially, maybe," put in Les Moore, the biggest of the three chums. "And sportily, but where does that get us? Listen, Bill, Jimmy's got it right. These fellows are not our kind. Let's hold off a while, and stay here in our own diggin's."

The three boys were in their rooms after a visit with the Beta Phis for dinner. The Betas, through some eastern connection, had learned Billy was in school. Looking him up, and finding him in company with the two other athletes, they had rushed the three for membership in the fraternity. Coming from a military school and knowing little of Greek letter or-

ganizations, the chums had agreed early to refuse invitations, or spikes, from fraternities until they were better acquainted with the ways of Jordan.

"I'm in favor of joining some time," Les argued. "Both of my brothers were Greeks at Ohio State, and they say the fraternity life was worth almost as much to them as the university work."

"Probably they're right too," said Jimmy. "But that was because they hooked up with the right gang."

Armstrong fell in with the thought of the other two, but when the Beta Phis, most of whom were from wealthy families and had plenty of money to spend, looked him up, he yearned to join them. The argument, after the dinner, lasted long into the night. Moore sought to end it.

"Anyhow," he declared, "we three stick together, and Jim and I vote against these Beta Phis. That oughta settle it."

"Well, that's not the way to convince Billy, and he's entitled to be shown," Jimmy objected. "Here, Billy. These cake-eaters in the Beta Phi crowd are not your kind, even if you think they are. Your dad could buy and sell the whole bunch, see? And so could you. Why should you tie up with a cheap imitation of society? If you want that sort of thing, wait till you get the real article."

"Atta boy," yelled Les. "That stops the show."

Billy dropped his advocacy of the Beta Phis. A few days later the fraternity question came up again, the Chi Sigma Taus sending a freshman football player to invite the three musketeers to dinner. Neither Les nor Billy was much impressed with this group, and Jimmy, when they were at home again, disposed of them shortly.

"I heard three different stories of poker games," he said, "and the losses of the boys, most of them

rhinies as I gathered, went from eighteen to sixty-one dollars. I don't set up for a saint. But I didn't come to college to learn poker."

When the Nu Nu Thetas, standing first in the university in scholastic ranking, rushed the trio after discovering that Jimmy held a prized new scholarship, Jim was again the one who cast the deciding opinion.

"Came here to school to study and get all I can," he said, when Les and Billy asked his verdict. "But I didn't come here to be a dusty, dandruff-covered grind."

"Well, if you don't want the Beta Phis and their society, or the Chi Sigmas and their sport, or the Nu Nus and their scholarship, what in the name of gosh do you want?" demanded Billy Armstrong.

"I've said all along I don't know much about this Greek letter idea——" began Jimmy slowly.

"All Greek to you, hey?" laughed the husky Les Moore.

"But if I join any fraternity at all, it's going to be one of good, average, ordinary, every-day guys," said Jimmy. "Some students, and some athletes, and some cake-eaters——"

"Not many of them," interrupted Les.

"I'm not going to hook up with any crowd that's gone to seed on one idea, either study, or athletics, or women, or gambling. See?"

Once again the issue was settled temporarily, but it could not be disposed of completely in such an easy manner. Other fraternities, noting the prowess of the three youngsters from Lockerbie in football, and hearing vague stories of Billy's family connections,—“His old man's a billionaire, big copper man, New York broker,” et cetera,—sought acquaintance with the three. But for one reason or another, the boys refused all invitations.

Football and class work kept them occupied, although Billy's thoughts turned frequently to fraternity life. Trained by his mother to appreciate social contact and social standing, Billy could not forget the importance of fraternity association.

"But that's the least important angle," Les avowed.

"What fraternity did your brothers belong to?" asked Billy.

"They were Alpha Omegas at Ohio," said Les. "Chapter here."

"How do they stand?" Billy asked.

"Oh, I don't know,—all right, I guess," Les replied. "But I'm not gonna look 'em up and invite 'em to invite me to join."

"Well, nobody asked you to," said Billy.

It is not to be wondered at that the idea of fraternity life continued to bob up in the minds of the three musketeers. A big university is a lonesome place for youngsters who have few home or family acquaintances in the student body. Even three boys that eat, study and play football together may become lonely for want of other friendly relationships. Jordan, too, is a thoroughly organized school. It is said of Jordan that any boy wishing to join a fraternity, and able to afford the association, may have his opportunity. Three-fourths of the students are found in fraternity memberships.

Graduates remember their fraternity life before almost anything else, and the friendships formed in Greek letter organizations last longer than any other. Our three musketeers, standing together against the whole student body, in a sense, felt an only natural longing for more close friends. The further they went into the school term, the more they thought of allying themselves with some group. But also, the further they went, the more difficult the problem became.

Moore said little, as regards a choice of fraternities. Jimmy ruled out most of the Greeks that approached them, and even Billy Armstrong, who longed most for social contact, turned thumbs down now and then.

"Bunch of duds," was his ungracious comment on most of the Greeks that entertained them.

"All they do is brag about themselves," he said again and again.

"Sell us on their fraternities," commented Les Moore.

"Tell us about all the college presidents, All-American half-backs, bank heads, and United States Senators that belong to their gang," added Jimmy, laughing.

But the problem finally was settled, and on the solution hangs a little story of its own, tied up, however, with a scrimmage between the freshmen and the varsity football elevens. One Wednesday afternoon in late October, the freshman first team, headed by Jim Byers at quarter-back, was called out for a practise game with the varsity, preparing for a big game on the following Saturday.

The freshmen, including Jim, Les and Billy, had been molded into a tight, hard-fighting, team-working eleven, able to give the varsity a stiff battle at almost any time. Several of the boys appeared to be coming stars, with the three musketeers holding their own valiantly. Willingness to work together for the team's success, and the canny leadership of Jimmy Byers at quarter-back, topped off the winning assets of the rhinies. When the line-up was called out for this particular scrimmage, however, it developed that Burton, the regular first freshman center, was missing.

"Here, Jake," called Coach Masterson. "Go in there at center."

A big husky youngster, of about six feet and two hundred pounds, responded. He wore a headgear which hid most of his features, the ear protectors almost covering the sides of his face, and the forehead leather nearly hiding his eyes. Jimmy knew the boy only as Jake, but thought vaguely as they lined up for a short signal practise that he had a familiar appearance. Then he turned his attention to signals, running over some plays Masterson had told him to use against the varsity,—Minnesota plays, because varsity's Saturday battle was with the great Gophers of the Northwest.

Coach Phillips had high hopes for his varsity eleven. It had won all its games to date, and he faced the Minnesota game with confidence. Not the least reason for this confidence was the mighty play of big Hilligoss, early enemy of Jim Byers, at left tackle.

Hilligoss had come into his own. But he carried bad blood against Jimmy. Jim always kept his eyes open and protected himself. Armstrong, playing right end against Hilligoss at left tackle, teamed with Jimmy in their campaign of defense. Hilligoss, almost as big as the two rhinies put together, waged a vengeful battle against them, but they held their own. Jimmy, getting ready for another set-to, had Hilligoss in the back of his head, but it did not occur to him at the moment that the new center, subbing for Burton, closely resembled his burly enemy. It may have been because Hilligoss always played bareheaded, his great shock of curly black hair waving in the wind, whereas the new center almost hid under a headgear too large for him.

"All right, Les. Come on, Billy and Jake. Let's go, gang," yelled Jimmy, when Coach Phillips ordered the game started.

They lined up, varsity to kick off, freshmen to

receive, and Jim took his place under the goal-posts. The varsity full-back booted the ball, high up and far down, straight into Jimmy's hands. He took the ball, and swung into stride, sizing up the field as he started. After a few steps he saw that the varsity right wing came down the field faster than the left. A gap appeared between them, so he swung off to the right, toward the advancing varsity left side. Then, at the twenty-five-yard line, he veered sharply to his left, and cut in through the gap and between the two sides of the advancing varsity line. Picking up speed, he straightened away again, and headed up the field for the varsity goal, surprised to find himself in the clear.

At the forty-yard line he passed the last stack-up, three players sprawled on the ground. Sidestepping them, he flew on, seeing only the varsity quarter-back, playing safety on his own forty-yard line. The quarter warily stood still, waiting for Jimmy to pick his course. Knowing he could not out-sprint the varsity man in a race to get around him near the sidelines, Jimmy headed directly for him. He intended to feint to the left, and then dodge around the tackle by cutting sharply to the right.

Then he heard a shout behind him. He turned his head quickly and glanced over his shoulder. A great black-haired giant pounded along at his heels, racing to catch him. Hilligoss!

Determined to get down the field for a touch-down, and as anxious to avoid being caught from behind as to dodge the waiting varsity quarter-back, Jimmy put on extra speed. He raced at the quarter, feinted abruptly to the left, and then cut quickly to the right. But his feint was too quick, and he shifted to the right too hastily. The varsity quarter, a deadly tackler, nailed him.

"Couldn't get away from the big stiff behind me," thought Jimmy as he went down, unconsciously tightening his grip on the football to avert a fumble when he hit the ground.

"Nice goin', kid," muttered the varsity quarter. "Had me worried."

But Jimmy did not hear the words. Instead, a heavier voice boomed in his ear, a voice laden with anger and disappointment.

"Why didn't yuh wait for me?"

And at the same instant he felt himself jerked off the ground, up out of the quarter's arms, and shaken angrily. The big man coming up from the rear had snatched him and shaken him as a Newfoundland dog might shake a kitten. The big fellow glared at him angrily, brown eyes blazing, and black hair flaunting wildly in the wind.

"I—I thought you were Hilligoss," faltered Jimmy. "Wanted to get away."

"Well, I *am* Hilligoss. *Your* Hilligoss, and I'd have cleared this baby outa your way," panted the big fellow. "Now you've lost us that touch-down."

"For the love of Mike," and Jimmy broke into a sheepish grin. "But say, where'd *you* come from? Where's your man?"

"I put him down, and came on to help yuh," said Jake Hilligoss. "He's just getting up, now. Oh, well, c'mon, kid. Better luck next time."

"But where you been?" demanded Jimmy. "All this time."

"Subbin' around,—but I'm through subbin'. Here's where I win a job," Jake declared.

"Thatta boy, I'm with you," said Jimmy.

All through scrimmage he kept an eye on the big fellow, and realized that young Jake Hilligoss was indeed winning his job. And he could not help laughing

at himself for running into the varsity quarter's arms to get away from his old enemy, much as he lamented his failure to get away for a touch-down from kick-off.

"Ran right into that quarter's arms," mocked Les Moore that night. "And you're the guy that knows how to get past a man in open field."

"Yeah, but he needs a pair of glasses. Eyes are getting bad," Billy Armstrong laughed. "He thought this big kid was our old friend Hilligoss."

"Well, I hated to lose the touch-down, but it was worth it to find out that we've got a real football player to take center for us," Jimmy declared. "This young Hilligoss——"

"Is a horse for work," Les interrupted.

"And a bear for fight," Billy added. "He put down both of the varsity centers all afternoon. Once he came out and made a tackle outside me."

"If he doesn't make center on the varsity next year, I miss my guess," Jimmy predicted confidently.

Just then they heard a knock at their door, and Les answered it. Les Moore was a husky youngster himself, weighing about one hundred and seventy-five pounds and being five feet ten inches tall. But when he opened the door and the newcomer appeared, Les looked like a little boy admitting a full-grown man. It was young Jake Hilligoss, looming up so big that he seemed to squeeze through the doorway.

"Hi, felluhs," he said. "Thought I'd run in and chin a little football. And I want to apologize to Byers, too."

"What for?" demanded Jimmy. "Come in. Sit down on the bed,—or here, take the chair. But why do you want to apologize to me?"

"Well, I jumped yuh this afternoon for not makin' a touch-down," said Jake, sitting down on the bed so

hard that the springs creaked and the bedstead groaned under his bulk. "I've been thinkin' about it. I jumped yuh because yuh didn't wait for me, but that wasn't your fault. It was mine."

"How come?" queried Jim.

"Well, just before the kick-off I got mad at that fool headgear, too big for me, and I threw it away," Jake explained. "Guess I look a lot like my brother, with my hair all loose, and that's what fooled yuh. I'm sorry."

"You should worry," laughed Jimmy, making light of the whole affair, but appreciating Jake's decency in offering the apology. "If a man doesn't know his own center, he ought to lose a touch-down."

"Well, you'll know me better next time, because I'm cert'n'y gonna stick on 'at old team long enough to get acquainted," declared Hilligoss.

The boys laughed, and cheered his determination. They talked football for perhaps half an hour and then young Hilligoss rose to go. Before he left, he invited them to have dinner with him at his fraternity house the next evening.

"What fraternity?" asked Billy Armstrong, with interest.

"The Alpha Omegas," said Jake. "We can go over to the house together after practise."

Our three musketeers accepted the invitation, and thanked him for it. When Jake had gone, they talked it over.

"If they're all as white as that baby, I'm for 'em," proclaimed Billy.

"Decent of him to come over and apologize, Jim," Les said.

"Yes, but I already liked him, for the way he got mad when I didn't wait and let him take out that varsity quarter for me," Jimmy replied. "And maybe

you think he's not a whale. He shook me like a little girl shaking her doll."

"Why didn't you tell him your brothers belong to that crowd, Les?" asked Billy.

"Too much like coaxin' 'em to look me over," Les grinned. "But say, Jim, this kid's a whole lot different from his brother, even if they do look alike."

"What makes you think so?"

"The older one's been fighting us like as tom-cat," said Les. "And alla time he's in wrong. Think he'd ever try to square himself, and be decent like his brother?"

Next evening the three boys went with Jake Hilligoss to the Alpha Omega house for dinner, and met the members of Jake's fraternity. When dinner was announced, young Jake turned them over to his older brother, and excused himself, saying he had to wait on the table.

"Gotta earn part of my expenses," he said.

The three musketeers were somewhat embarrassed at first, and expected to see the older Hilligoss in the same predicament. But Hilligoss was not at all abashed. Instead he very manfully told his story of their fight.

"I got off on the wrong foot with you fellows," he said. "And I'm sorry. It was this way: I'd subbed two years on the varsity. Didn't know any football because I hadn't played until I came here. Jake did, and he's a comer. No subbin' around for Jake. But anyway, I subbed two years, and that day we played you the first time was my first chance to make good as a regular. Well, I was nervous. And then I got sore, and,—oh, well, you know how it is. But I'll say this for you birds, you cert'n'y handed me better than I sent, and I'm for yuh."

He laughed and shook hands again with all three

of the boys. All three, agreeably surprised, told him it was all in the game. And added that he had certainly been handling his job on the varsity. Then Hilligoss led Jimmy into the dining-room, asking others of the Alpha Omegas to escort Les and Billy. The dinner, marked by loud and good-natured chaffing, and followed by the singing of fraternity songs, was the most enjoyable the musketeers had known at any of the Greek houses.

Jake rejoined them after they had left the dining-room and he had finished his work as a waiter.

"Sorry to desert you guys," he said, "but my old man's practise won't send my brother and me both to school at once. Especially for medicine, which is more expensive than some other courses. So I earn my board on the tables. Keeps down up-keep."

"Many of the guys here working their way through?" asked Jimmy.

"Sure, half a dozen of 'em," said Jake. "But then we've got some fellows rich as high-test gas, too. All sorts, in this crowd. Good students, bum ones, cake-eaters, coal-miners, women-chasers and haters."

After they had met and talked with practically all the Alpha Omegas, sitting about a big lounging-room, Jimmy, Les and Billy thanked their hosts and begged to be excused. They pleaded the necessity for studying.

"Oh, that's all right," laughed Jake. "I was just gonna tell you it's almost eight o'clock, anyhow."

"Bedtime?" queried Les Moore, grinning.

"No, we have to go to study-table at eight," Jake explained. "All us rhinies have to study from eight to ten. But say, listen, fellows, our gang is gonna spike you-all, and when they do, I wish you'd come in with us. I think we c'd play ball together, don't you, hey?"

"Maybe we could," said Jimmy. "We'll think about it, and thanks for a nice dinner."

The boys put in some five minutes shaking hands with the thirty-odd Alpha Omegas, and then took their way homeward. When they had reached their rooms, and sat down to loaf a few minutes before taking up their books, they compared notes.

"Well?" said Les Moore. "Those guys are just like the crowd my brothers belonged to, over at Ohio."

"Yeah, but one of 'em drives a straight-eight and says he can show me more pull on a hill than I can get out of my six roadster," protested Billy Armstrong. "I'll show him something, see if——"

"Then it looks like Les has found his kind, and Billy's found *his*, and I'll say these Hilligosses suit me," said Jimmy.

"Hilligeese," chuckled Les Moore.

"What do you say?" asked Jim.

"O. K.," said Les.

"K. O.," echoed Billy, with a grin.

"Well then, it's unanimous," Jimmy pronounced. "Now then, do you want to know what, besides these big Hilligeese, makes me fall for the Alpha Omegas?"

"No, but you're gonna tell us anyhow," said Les.

"Sure, I am," grinned Jimmy. "It's this: nearly every guy that I talked to wanted to find out something about *me*, instead of telling me something about *them*. I figure if they think it's more important to find out about us than it is to advertise themselves to us, then they must be all right. If they've always worked that way, then nobody's been taken in that is not all right, too. See?"

"Said the blind man," jeered Billy Armstrong, laughing. "By hanging off, all we've done is to get set to join Les's crowd. That's what he's been framing alla time."

"We could do a whole lot worse," Les defended. "But say, guys, here's something I haven't any business knowing, but it shows the Alpha Omegas are all right. Alpha is the first letter, and Omega's the last, in the Greek alphabet, see? Well there's another word in the secret name of this frat that means 'friend.' The whole name means: 'Friends, First and Last.'"

"That's us," quoth Jimmy Byers.

CHAPTER X

HARD WATER

THE three musketeers sat in their room talking, as freshmen will, of many things.

"This is a swell-looking, big major numeral," said Billy. "But I can't say much for the sweater jacket. I could buy one a whole lot better than this one at home in New York."

"Yeah, you could get it with money," retorted Les sarcastically, "but this numeral costs you football, and lots of it."

"And it's the numeral that counts," chimed in Jimmy. "Not the sweater."

"But I'm tired of football," added Les. "Let's talk a little basketball."

"Boy, when we get into that old basketball game, and we're living at the Alpha Omega house, we'll sure be eating off the top shelf," proclaimed Billy.

"On top of the world," said Les Moore. "*If and when.*"

"Well, I can't do either one," declared Jim Byers gloomily.

"Who says you can't make the team?" demanded Les.

"And who'll keep you out of the house?" echoed Billy.

"I don't know whether I can make the team or not," replied Jimmy slowly. "Maybe I could, but I am not going to try. And I'm not going to live in the house, either, from the way things look right now."

"Where d'yuh get that stuff?" asked the other two, in one breath. "What's the big idea, anyhow?"

"Lay off, and pipe down," retorted Jimmy pugnaciously. "You guys act like I *want* to stay out of basketball and the house. Did anybody say I'd *like* to break off living with you fellows?"

"Well, then, what the samhill——" began Les Moore.

"The samhill is this," Jimmy explained. "I've been talking with Jake Hilligoss about the expense of living in the fraternity house, and it will take more than I can spend. You fellows know that all I've got is this scholarship, and what little my dad left me. I can't afford to use that up, and go broke. The scholarship *might* stretch and cover extra expense, but I figure it wasn't intended to give me luxuries. So I'm going to find a job. And if I find it I'll not have time for basketball. That's all."

"And leave us flat?" complained Les.

"Aw, listen, you can arrange the money end of it. My dad would be tickled to death to help——" began Billy.

"Close your can, Bill," ordered Jimmy gruffly. "You know blamed well that I've taken all I'm going to from your father. He's done more than I can ever pay back. But as for deserting you guys, Les, you're all wet. I'm only going to work so I can stay with you two when you move into the Alpha Omega house. See?"

The conversation turned into a rag-chewing match, with Les and Billy ganging on the stubbornly independent Jimmy. They had been reviewing a hard football season in which all three had won numerals, and the review was good-natured. But in the argument over basketball and living expenses, all three were close to losing their tempers. Les and Billy raised their voices, and threatened, coaxed, wheedled and bullied. But Byers held to his determination, al-

though he did not know where to seek work that would pay him enough extra money to permit living in the fraternity house.

While the wrangling was at its height, Jimmy was called to the telephone in the hall below stairs, leaving Les and Billy to ponder the situation. When he returned they renewed their attack on his program, only to find themselves stopped.

"Forget it," said Jim, "I've got to go over to Dean Warrenden's house, right away."

"Gonna take your scholarship away from yuh?" Les Moore suggested.

"He would if I were as poor a student as the two tramps living with me," Jimmy grinned, clutching his cap and dodging for the door a step ahead of two books flung swiftly at him.

"G'wan, highbrow, and play around with the dean," yelled Billy after him.

But Jim did not hear, having slammed the door behind him. He hurried out of the house and half walked, half ran to the dean's home. His gait had earned him the nickname of "Dog-trot," later shortened to "Doggie," from his fellow freshmen on the football field. Arriving at Dean Warrenden's porch he paused for breath a moment before ringing the door-bell.

"Good evening, Byers," the dean greeted him when he opened the door. "Come in. I will not keep you long. You probably wish to study, and I'm unusually busy myself. How have you been?"

"Pretty busy, with football on top of study," said Jim. "But I'll have more time for work from now on."

"Glad to hear that," said the dean, leading the way to his study. "Sit down, won't you? If you don't mind, I'd like to tell you a problem I have, and ask your help. President Allison, of the M. G. and V. Railroad, has called on me for help. He is quite a

friend of the school of commerce," Dean Warrenden explained, plunging directly into his story, "and a personal friend as well. He has asked the university, through me, for assistance in a railroad problem. The university is a state institution, and frequently is called on by industries for technical or scientific cooperation."

Jim Byers listened eagerly. Railroading held a great fascination for him. He sat forward in his chair as the dean told the story of the "Morning Glory," in the words of the road's chief executive. Hard water, the dean concluded, was the trouble of the "Morning Glory" line, and the president desired a group of university people to make a study of the situation.

"We wish to send four men for a trip of inspection over the system," said Dean Warrenden, "and I'd like for you to be one of the four."

"But I don't know anything about chemistry, sir," protested Jimmy.

"It is not necessary that you should," the dean assured him. "At least, I think it is unnecessary, and the president of the university has upheld me in that view. Professor Chilton, of the department of chemistry, and John Holland, an instructor, will be on the trip. The fourth man is Abel Simmons, from the department of engineering. I wanted you to go, partly because of your interest in railroading, and partly because I shall expect you to make a report to me for the school of commerce, on operation as you see it. For that, I shall allow you extra credit. Besides, your scholarship on railroad study can be justified by this trip."

"Well, I'd certainly be glad to go," said Jimmy. "Especially if I thought I would be useful at all."

"Then, that's settled," exclaimed the dean. "Good. The inspection party leaves Wednesday morning, the

day before Thanksgiving, and it will be gone at least a week. President Allison will be here to pick up the party early Wednesday. And—er—Byers, there is something else I should tell you. It may not be professional in me to—uh—mention it. But Professor Chilton, while a colleague and a highly esteemed personal friend of mine, is inclined to be somewhat overzealous in behalf of his profession. He was very anxious to make the party one of chemists only; in short, he wished to seize this occasion as one in which his department is solely concerned. I know I can tell you this, and it will not go any further. It is only fair that I should put you on your guard."

"Thank you, sir," replied Jimmy. "I think I understand. I'll try to serve the school of commerce, without causing any embarrassment," he added.

"Fine, that's fine, and we will depend on you," said the dean.

Back home again Jimmy told the story, in part, to Les and Billy, both of whom were burning with curiosity. But when he had finished, they began making light of his assignment. Fine mess, they said, when a great railroad had to call on a rhiny quarter-back to solve its water problem. Did this president think his water troubles were more important than the freshman basketball team? And how did Jimmy figure this thing would help his problem of moving into the fraternity house?

"All I know is that I'm going on the trip, and maybe something will work out of it," declared Jim. "Anyhow, I'm going to keep my eyes and ears open."

"Think you can tell how hard water is, by sight or sound?" grinned Les.

"But, boy, you'll look good swelling down the line in the president's special car," suggested Billy, in mock seriousness.

"Think of me, you guys, when you're at home throwing the Thanksgiving turkey for a loss," Jim replied.

President Allison, of the "Morning Glory," served his little party with a splendid Thanksgiving dinner in his private car, and Jimmy grinned to himself as he recalled his request to Les and Billy. He was enjoying himself, for he was learning, at first hand, what turns the wheels of a railroad and makes it run. President Allison proved more than kind, and had even seemed to take a fancy to him. This may have been because Professor Chilton, and his assistant, Holland, were so deeply engrossed in chemistry that they could not take part in casual conversation between stops. Too, the president may have noticed how the professor and his assistant seemed to elbow Jimmy and the engineering instructor, Simmons, out of their way at each visit to a watering station.

Jimmy said nothing, and neither did Abel Simmons. But the second day out, when the train stopped for water at a country town, Professor Chilton fairly shoved him and Simmons to one side. Jimmy, quickly angry, remembered the dean's warning, and grinned at Simmons. The latter, understanding, grinned back. It so happened that President Allison noticed this exchange, and chuckled to himself.

It was during the Thanksgiving dinner that the president told the railroad's story in detail. The system, he said, had in its earlier days used water from the rivers it crossed. But this water carried a heavy percentage of silt. It was impracticable to build a settling basin at each watering place. Chemical settling processes also were out of the question. The line had thereupon put down driven wells all along the road, and used pure well water.

"All our water is pure and clean," he said. "We do not have to settle it, and it is plentiful in supply. *But*, and here is our trouble, it all carries a heavy lime content. You all know that lime collects, corrodes or forms a heavy scaly deposit in boilers. You have seen what it does to teakettles in the kitchen. Well, it costs us a large sum annually to clean the lime deposits out of the boilers. In the first place, we lose the use of our engines, and that hurts because we are short on engines. In the second place, it is a costly job to clean out the boilers. And in the third place, we sometimes have to retube or rebuild them, and that is expensive. If we had the money, we would rebuild our entire water system and put in the proper facilities. Short of funds, we must find some other answer."

"I should venture that we will be able to recommend some sort of water-softening process," pronounced Professor Chilton rather pompously. "We have had some success in chemical problems. Chlorine has proved helpful. Filtration might be of some advantage. We will take a sample of the water from each well, bottle it and send it back to the laboratories, analyze it and——"

"Find out that it is hard water," interrupted President Allison. "We already know that, Professor."

"Of course, of course, but in solving any problem of chemistry, sir, we must begin at the beginning," Professor Chilton continued. He went on with his discussion, but Jimmy lost his words. He had looked out the window to smile at President Allison's interruption. And then he fell to thinking of the president's description of the loss on locomotives. A piece of machinery out of usage, in which money is invested, is expensive. This was a new wrinkle to him, and he turned it over in his mind as a dog worries over a bone.

That afternoon they stopped at a water tank, and as before, Professor Chilton officiously took charge of the inspection while his assistant obtained a sample of the water, bottled and labeled it. Jimmy, although a steady drizzling rain was falling, wandered about the vicinity. He saw a cattle and stock-yard near by, and noticed that it was a sea of mud. The rain and water running off the roofs of sheds turned the black earth into slop.

At the next stop, a roundhouse filled with puffing and panting engines, he willingly moved to the outside of the picture and left the professor to conduct the inspection. Cinders covered the ground about the roundhouse, but rain from the roof had softened them so that they squashed and splashed underfoot. At the edge of the cinder path, Jimmy found a lake of clay. Beyond the water tank stood some wide-spread, barn-like structures, used as carpenter sheds for car repair work. Jim strolled along beside the sheds, but had to take care to stay as far away as the railroad track, because water from the eaves splashed noisily into a ditch running alongside the foundation of the buildings. His shoes were muddy, but he did not wish to have his trousers covered with the muddy water.

That night they stopped in the city of Meanwell, a considerable freight-shipping center. The water tank here stood near the freight sheds. President Allison asked them to make their inspection yet that evening, before going to a hotel for the night. Jimmy wandered into the freight yard and found a truck stalled in the mud. The steady, late fall rain still was falling, but Jim prowled about the freight yard until he found one corner of the freight house lighted by a near-by arc-light. Rain-water ran in a steady stream from the roof to the ground. He rejoined the party, wondering how much of the mud was caused

by direct rainfall, and how much by the downpour from the roof.

All the next day and the day after, at water tank after water tank, Jimmy sloshed and splashed around with apparent aimlessness the while Professor Chilton and his assistant officiously sampled and bottled water from the railroad walls. The fussy professor, anxious to impress President Allison with his eagerness and ability to render service, staged a great show of efficiency. He ignored Jimmy, and his assistant took occasion to make slighting remarks to Jimmy and Simmons, or about them, when he could.

The inspection trip lasted a week and a day, and President Allison stayed with the party all the while. The water problem, he explained, was of sufficient importance alone to justify his taking the time, but he had other inspection matters to attend while going over the system. The party was tired out when Jordan was reached again, but Professor Chilton was still optimistic and important, and President Allison continued suave and good-natured. Whether he entertained hopes of results from the inspection, only he could have told. He gave no hint of his expectations when he bade the party good-by.

"Well, sir," proclaimed the professor, "I have every hope that we will be able to render you some small service. We will first test each sample separately. We have collected at each roundhouse some of the lime scale that has caused you so much trouble. We shall analyze that, too, and while we can only guess where the water came from that produced the scale, I still feel we will arrive at the true condition of affairs."

"We've arrived there long since," smiled President Allison. "The true condition of affairs is this: we're losing money day by day because our locomotives are

laid up too often and too long for repairs to the boilers. Hard water does it."

"Precisely, precisely," said Professor Chilton. "Now then, with the results of our analytical work definitely before us, we will be able to prepare recommendations as to the proper method of procedure. We will also ascertain what other railroads have done to combat this problem, and——"

"That will be fine, providing you find one that has solved the problem at no tremendous expense," interrupted President Allison. "Young fellow," he turned to Jimmy with a friendly smile, "what have you learned about our railroad?"

"Well, sir, it is the muddiest railroad I ever saw," said Jimmy, grinning.

"Of all the irrelevant, off-the-point remarks——" began Professor Chilton pettishly. But then he stopped, and changing his tone, said, "Well, good-by, sir, we will let you hear from us." Then he took himself and his assistant off.

"What has the muddiness of our railroad got to do with our hard-water problem?" asked President Allison quizzically. "Not," he added, "that I deny we are a muddy railroad."

"Well," said Jimmy with a grin, "the water that makes this mud is certainly not hard water. It is rain-water, soft water. And not all of it, by a long shot, falls directly on the ground it turns into mud. A whole lot of it is your own water, running off your freight houses, your passenger stations, your round-houses, your cattle sheds,——"

"Hey, wait a minute, young speed merchant," chided the president. "Say all that again, and say it slowly." A smile broke across his features as he realized Jimmy's point.

"Well, I don't know anything about chemistry,"

Jimmy explained, "but I noticed that out of twenty-three water stations we looked at rain-water from roofs was available at twenty. Rain-water is soft. Well water is hard. If it is *too* hard, why not catch some of your own soft water and mix the two? At three of these stations, after I noticed the mud caused by roof run-off, I had Simmons, the engineer, estimate the roof space and guess at the water supply available for cistern storage or direct well or tank mixing. He says——"

"I should worry what *he* says," exclaimed President Allison. "You've already said a great large mouthful. Our engineers are smart, even if they didn't see this thing, and they can figure the details. Downspouts and water pipes will cost a whole lot less than any elaborate water treatments that the professor can dig up. Boy, I'm certainly much obliged to you, and, by George,——"

"I've had a swell time," said Jimmy.

"Son," said Allison, "of all sad words hot off the bat, the saddest are, 'I never thought of that.' Which makes bum poetry, but high philosophy. Everybody in our system has been trying to figure out this water problem, and here you've probably got the answer."

"And even if you don't kill this water bird you can kill another one by catching the rain-water," said Jimmy.

"What's that?"

"Well, I saw one truck stuck in the mud in a freight yard," Jim explained. "And at another place some cattle were up to their knees in mud when they set foot outside the sheds. Your customers will like the road a lot better if they can——"

"Get to us without mud-boats," interrupted President Allison. "Boy, you're right. Unless I miss my guess mightily, we're going to kill two birds with one

stone. I'm certainly glad you went along with us, and I hope I can call you in again sometime. Where can I get hold of you?"

"I'm planning to live at the Alpha Omega house," said Jimmy.

"Is that so? By George, my son's chapter," exclaimed Allison. "Well, good-by, boy, and good luck. I'll let you know how we come out on this thing."

Jimmy, elated because his simple, common-sense suggestion had found such instant favor with the president of the "Morning Glory," went directly to Dean Warrenden's home to report. The dean rejoiced at the simplicity of Jim's discovery and, although he did not say as much, was pleased to realize that his insistence on Jimmy's joining the expedition to represent his school had borne results.

"Professor Chilton will be disappointed, if his department does not provide the answer to the problem," he said.

"The professor and his assistant were very thorough, sir," said Jimmy.

"Yes, but by the time he turns in his report, Allison probably will have all his buildings equipped with piping, and the rain-water in his boilers," smiled the dean. "As he would say, sense sometimes beats science. I am glad you went with them, Byers. It will be a feather in the cap of our school, and a credit to you. Now then, if you'll turn in a report on your observations, I'll be pleased to have it. Later, we probably will hear from Allison."

It was not so much later. Jimmy left Dean Warrenden's home and went in search of his buddies, to reestablish the old firm of the three musketeers. They were later reaching home than usual, because basketball practise that day had been transferred to an evening hour. Too, they had stopped for a little while

at the Alpha Omega house en route home. But Jimmy heard Les and Billy racing each other up the stairs. They burst together in at the door.

"Where's the captain of industry?" yelled Les.

"Let's look at the railroad expert," demanded Billy, as the pair fell on Jimmy's shoulders.

He fought them off as best he could, but the good-natured scuffle seemed to be their substitute for a handshake of greeting.

"But say, what the samhill have you been black-mailing old man Allison for?" demanded Les, suddenly withdrawing from the sham battle.

"Holding up a poor old railroad for money, hey?" queried Billy, out of breath.

"How come? What's the idea? I haven't——" began Jimmy, puzzled.

"We stopped at the Alpha Omega house on the way home, and the guys there said old man Allison had telephoned in and asked that your house bill for the rest of the year be sent to him personally," exclaimed Les.

"And they promised to do it, too," added Billy.

"Well, for the lova—can yuh beat that? Listen, guys——" but Jimmy could not finish. He was too much overcome.

"What?" they demanded.

"I won't—I won't——" he began weakly.

"Let's hear yuh say you'll not stand for it," they yelled, and leaped at him threateningly.

"I won't be long, now, getting out for basketball practise," concluded Jimmy weakly, but with a grin.

CHAPTER XI

SEVENTH STEP

"THE last practise for freshman basketballers will be an examination," announced Coach George Reedy, of the rhiny squad, in the gym one late winter evening. "Fifteen of you will take this exam, and eight of you can pass it."

The boys of the squad sat breathing hard, as the result of a strenuous workout, on bleacher seats that lined one wall of the gymnasium. Puzzled by his statement, and the mysterious smile on his face, they watched the coach closely. Not the least interested were the three musketeers,—big Les, back guard; Billy, center, and Jimmy, hard-working forward. The first two were among the outstanding players on the squad, but Byers had stuck through several cuts and weedings only by sheer persistence and hard work.

"The examination is to find eight boys who will be ordered to report to Coach Mason, for preliminary work on next year's varsity," continued Coach Reedy. "To-morrow evening I will name two teams, and they will play a regulation game, after taking five minutes to arrange signals. The other five boys will break in from time to time. After the game, I will choose eight to work two weeks with the varsity for next season. Now then, all of you get some sleep and report to-morrow night ready to give everything you've got."

The boys shuffled off to the showers and dressing-room, glad the regular season's grind had ended, and

looking forward anxiously to the final test. Jimmy headed the group, going off the gym floor at a dog-trot, as if he had no worries of any kind. His chums overtook him only when they had all dressed and started homeward from the gymnasium.

"Gosh, you go trotting around like a frisky pup," commented Moore.

"As if you didn't have a worry in the world," added Armstrong.

"Well," said Jimmy, "there may be *some* poor rhinies around here worrying about passing that examination. I could name two, but I know blamed well I'm not worrying about it. I know I won't make the grade, so I'm not losing any sleep."

"Where'd yuh get 'at stuff?" demanded Moore.

"Poison Ivy asking for a job as a shrinking violet?" jeered Billy.

"Listen, you can't kid me till after I've got the habit of kidding myself," retorted Jimmy. "I know how much basketball I know, and can play. And I know that Mason, of the varsity, as well as Reedy, likes his men big and husky. No use for shrimps."

"You've stuck all season," exclaimed Moore.

"Only because all the guys that had to be cut off were little fish, too," Jim replied. "Nope. You two guys worry about making the varsity squad, and I'll sleep."

"Saaay," drawled Armstrong, as they approached the fraternity house where they lived, "you'll go out for this game, or I'll——"

"Who said I wasn't going out?" Jimmy demanded. "Of course I'll go out, and play, too, if Reedy puts me in. But I'm not going to sit up to-night worrying over getting a call to report to the varsity. That's one thing I've got on you birds."

It was study hour in the fraternity house, and re-

membering a strongly enforced rule demanding silence, the boys dropped their ragging and went to their room quietly. Jimmy immediately plunged into a book, but Les and Billy began talking basketball. How would Reedy line them up? Would they get a chance to work together on the same five? Would they start, or get in as substitutes? A thousand and one questions agitated them, but Jimmy plowed through his text-book as if no argument or discussion were within a hundred miles of him.

The three boys had done well in football, but Byers fell short of the other two in basketball. Jordan goes on the old theory that a good big man is better than a good little man, in basketball as in football, and Jordan coaches waste no time on little fellows when huskies are in sight. Moore, standing five feet ten, weighed in with his basketball togs at one hundred and seventy-five pounds. Billy, hefting only one hundred and seventy pounds, was six feet two inches tall, and rated well as a center, while Moore's stocky build stood him in good stead at back guard. But Jimmy found his one hundred and sixty pounds and five-feet-eight a handicap which was not easily overcome in basketball.

He worked hard at the game, but did not worry over his prospects, for he really preferred to drop basketball. Attending Jordan by virtue of a scholarship, he wanted time for study. It was all very well for Armstrong and Moore, both from wealthy families, to look at the future lightly; but Jimmy, with no backing, felt that he ought to give most of his time to university work. Already, because of a natural liking for the subject and because his scholarship specified study of railroad problems, Jimmy looked ahead to a lifetime of work in the transportation field.

After an hour of grinding, Jimmy closed his book

and found the restless Billy and Les also ready to quit study for bed.

"Hope you guys sleep as hard as I do," he grinned. "But I'll bet you don't. It's not every bird that has a chance, in one game, to qualify for the varsity's spring workout."

"Won't be much kick to it unless you crash through yourself," muttered Les Moore.

"Well, you're big boys now, and you can't have papa with you always to look after you," grinned Jimmy mischievously.

"You poor, croupy, little fish——" began Billy.

"How'd yuh get 'at way?" demanded Les, diving at Jimmy's waist and dragging him to the floor, where Billy joined them. Together they sat on him.

"What really worries us——" began Billy again.

"Is what will become of me when you two are not taking care of me," interrupted Jimmy, laughing. "I know it. Let me up."

"All right, since you've got sense," growled Les. "But listen, swear you'll do your darnedest to crash through to the varsity to-morrow night?"

"Sure, but it would be a nuisance, and I'd rather study," said Jimmy, rising as the other two clambered to their feet, and brushing his clothes.

"Feature that?" demanded Les and Billy, staring at each other in disbelief. "A nuisance to make the varsity? The guy's goofy."

Jimmy did not argue the matter, and all three proceeded to bed in the attic dormitory.

Rhiny basket practise next night found fifteen anxious and nervous youngsters ready to go. Even Jimmy Byers, usually cool and at ease, shared the general nervousness although, in view of his feeling about the game, it would be hard to understand why. Coach

Reedy called the boys off the floor after a session of basket shooting for warming-up purposes, and announced the two line-ups he had chosen. Jim paid little attention, for he did not expect to be chosen on either five, but he did listen closely to hear the names of his buddies.

"I have arranged the two line-ups to give everybody a chance," announced Coach Reedy. "The two teams will be the Freemans and the Armstrongs. Freeman will take center on his team, with Adams and Maxwell to play forwards, and Simpson and Reno at guards."

"All the huskies ganged together," thought Jimmy, looking at Billy.

"Armstrong's team will have Hill and Longworth at forwards, Payne and Moore at guards, and Armstrong at center," continued Reedy. "Now then, the others will be substituted as the game goes along. Armstrong, take your team over there; Freeman, you and your five stay here. You have five minutes to arrange signals and team-play as you like. The rest of us will shoot baskets until time to start."

Jimmy trotted out on the floor with the other subs to toss the ball, while the two teams grouped together to lay out their plans of campaign. But before Jim left the little crowd, he gritted his teeth at Billy and Les, and clenched his fists together, at once warning and encouraging his chums to fight it out for all they were worth. He was glad they had been assigned to the same team.

"Coach must have figured Freeman's team the class of the bunch," he said to himself. "Anyway, he put most of the weight and size on that team."

When, presently, the two fives lined up for the first tip-off Jimmy's size-up of the situation proved correct. Paired off against each other for the first play,

the Freemans and Armstrongs displayed a disparity in weight and size that was all in favor of the Freemans. Billy Armstrong, alone on his team, matched his opponent in height. Les Moore, at back guard, loomed bulkier than either of the forwards on the Freeman five, but both outmatched him in height. Billy's forwards, Hill and Longworth, looked even slimmer and more wiry by comparison with the men guarding them than they did standing alone.

Coach Reedy blew his whistle, again warned the boys to put everything they had into the game, and then started the contest. Billy Armstrong won the tip-off with a good jump, and managed to slip the ball sidewise to Hill. But Hill's guard was on him like a hawk and wrested the ball from him. From that instant the reason for Jordan's choice of husky stalwart basketballers was apparent, for the Freemans took resolute charge of the contest and dominated it. They ran roughshod over the floor and over their opponents. Their game was clean, because they played the ball with determination and did no dirty work. None of the Freemans took time to rough the Armstrongs, but went smashing and pounding along at the ball consistently. If by chance any of the lighter, wirier Armstrongs got in the way, they suffered. Few fouls were called, and Billy's five made no complaints.

In five minutes the game was clearly in possession of the Freemans. Only two obstacles blocked them at all. Billy Armstrong won the tip-off repeatedly, but both his forwards were helpless against the strong checking of the Freeman guards. Once or twice, in desperation, Billy tried to follow through on his own tip-off and gain the ball for a shot or a pass. But whenever he sought to get down to the basket, either Freeman or Maxwell, the husky back guard, charged upon him so fiercely he could neither pass nor shoot.

Les Moore fought fiercely in the midst of a rough and tumble wrestling match under his basket, and usually emerged triumphant with the ball. None of the Freemans could get a close-in shot against Les, but he had little reinforcement from his floor guard, and the Freemans scored steadily from as far away as the foul-line. Toward the end of the first half, the Freemans slowed down somewhat, and Billy's five spurted. When the whistle ended the period, the Freemans held the lead, fourteen to nine.

Billy and Les flung themselves down on the bleacher seats, blowing hard, and their mates grouped with them. Jimmy wanted to join them and offer encouragement. He knew they were playing the game, but wished they might have some real support.

"Byers," he heard Coach Reedy calling his name, "join the Armstrongs. Tell Hill I said for him to drop out. Murray, you will start this half in place of Maxwell."

Rejoicing, Jimmy hurried to the little group huddled around Billy on the bleachers. Hill wished him well, and reported back to the coach.

"Good goin', gang," exclaimed Jimmy. "We can lick 'em this half."

"Yeah, if they'll come down off their road rollers," panted Billy.

"Anyway, Jim's got his chance to crash through," muttered Les.

"Fat chance of crashing, with all that weight against us," Billy grinned. "But Jim's a big stiff, and maybe he can do it."

"Crashing through is the job," exclaimed Jimmy. "Listen, gang. They've got weight against us, all around. The thing we've got to do is to use our weight where it will do the most good, see?"

"Yeah, back where they gang on me," grinned Les.

"No, I've got an idea," insisted Jim. "I've been watching while you guys have been working. Listen——" and he drew the others closer together in order to whisper his suggestions for a plan of attack. Les Moore wagged an apprehensive head at first, but Billy seized on the scheme as good strategy. Longworth and Payne backed him up. Jimmy thereupon went further into detail, and all five of them were chattering excitedly when Coach Reedy blew his whistle for the second half to begin.

"Let's go, gang," yelled Jimmy, jumping up.

"Hill will referee this half," announced Reedy, turning over his whistle to the ousted player. "I'll be on the side-lines watching, but Hill is in charge. No dirty work, or he'll call the fouls."

"Go get 'em, Bill," yelled Jim, from his post at forward, as Billy crouched for the jump at center.

Hill tossed the ball into the air, blew his whistle, and a different game of basketball got quickly under way. Billy jumped high above his man, reached the ball, and tipped it down behind Freeman. At the same instant big Les Moore, roaring like a mad Newfoundland dog, came smashing and tearing down the center of the floor past the pair in the ring, flung himself on the ball, and brought up short seeking a chance to pass. Simpson, guarding Jimmy, thought Byers was after the ball, and pounced for it himself. But Jimmy had merely feinted, and then dodged back toward the side-line, and the luckless Simpson took some of the medicine he had been dealing out to the lighter Hill in the first half. His shoulder encountered one of Les Moore's big thighs as he went down for the ball, and he was flung hard to one side.

Les, getting his bearings quickly, flipped the ball to Jimmy, and himself charged down on the basket, with Billy in close pursuit. Jimmy dribbled two steps,

coaxed the back guard out, and then simply handed the ball to Les for a shot at the goal. Les missed, but Billy, on his heels, batted it in through the meshes as it came down off the bank. Whistle. Freemans fourteen, Armstrongs eleven.

"C'mon, gang," yelled Jimmy.

"Let's go," echoed Billy. "Crash 'em home!"

Again the toss-up, again the whistle, and once more big Les came charging rampant down the floor. This time, as if by prearrangement, he did not hesitate once he had swooped down and gathered up the leather, but straightened up and dribbled directly for the basket. Reno rushed out to meet him, but Les leaped hard into the air and shot for the goal, falling hard upon his rival back guard as he came down. And the shot, as luck would have it, dropped through the hoop after circling the edge twice. Whistle. Freemans fourteen, Armstrongs thirteen.

Whistle again. Time out. The dismayed Freemans, finding their once dominated game slipping out of control, talked things over.

"Here, fellows," called Billy, gathering his team around him. "They'll try to stop us this time."

"As we said they would," commented Jimmy.

"As *you* said they would," grunted Les, out of breath from his strenuous efforts.

"But we know how to beat their blocking game, remember," warned Jim.

Time in again. The whistle. The jump, with Billy Armstrong leaping as if for life itself. He had to do his best, for Freeman, desperate, outdid himself. And Billy tipped the ball down, and once more Les, yelling at the top of his lungs, crashed through center. His man, Murray, came fast at his heels. And he encountered the new Freeman defense, finding both Reno and Simpson set for him close back on the circle.

The four of them pounded together, but none of them found the ball, for Billy had tipped it sidewise and Jimmy, alert, had snatched it away from a Freeman forward, posted to watch him. Without waiting to make sure of his target, Jimmy shot the ball on the bounce under the Freeman basket, and the slender Longworth, sneaking unnoticed in behind the Freeman guards, swooped it up at the loop as he slid out of bounds. The shot missed, but Billy Armstrong, a step ahead of Freeman, went under the basket on the run and batted the ball up again. He, too, missed, and smashed on out of bounds with Freeman atop him.

By this time, Jimmy, following his own pass, was under the basket. He snatched the ball off the floor on the bounce, and with a twisting, writhing motion, whirled it upward against the bank.

"Yay, Jim," yelled Les Moore, from the floor. "Atta shootin' fool!"

The ball had come down through the meshes. Whistle, Freemans fourteen, Armstrongs fifteen. Half the players came back upon the floor after having slipped out of bounds under the basket, and the game went on. The whistle again, and once more Les Moore came crashing through center. But this time the Freemans, all of them angry, forgot to play the ball. Two of them deliberately ganged on the husky back guard, and the three went down in a heap. Double foul, and Les made good on one shot. Freemans tried the same defense again, but this time Billy leaped sidewise as he went up, and came down with the ball, to dribble to the side of the floor before Freeman could cover him. By that time Reno and Simpson found Les did not have the ball, and rushed to cover their men. Les raced under the basket and took the pass from Billy for a shot for the goal. He missed. So did Billy, on the follow-up. But Jimmy slipped through

scrimmage under the bank, emerged with the leather, and made good on a one-handed, sidewise toss going away from the goal. Whistle. Freemans fourteen, Armstrongs eighteen.

But now another whistle. Time out. Coach Reedy talking.

"Come out, Byers," he called. "Baldwin takes your place. Wakefield, go in for Simpson. All right. Let's go."

But as he sat down again he noticed that Jimmy had hesitated to speak to Billy and Les before leaving the floor.

"Come on, Byers," he called, seemingly angry. "Here, sit down."

The game proceeded. Jimmy, disappointed at being taken out after having played only a few minutes, felt hurt, even though he had not reckoned seriously on his chance of being ordered to report for next year's varsity. He stole a furtive glance at Coach Reedy from the corners of his eyes, but the coach was writing on a slip of paper. Jimmy turned his head to study him for an instant, and saw the coach was scowling. He turned his attention back to the game. And forgot the coach, and the varsity tryout, in the excitement of watching his buddies battling for their chance on the team.

"I suppose you told 'em that, too, hey?" he suddenly heard Coach Reedy saying.

"How's that, sir?" asked Jimmy, pulling his sweat shirt closer about him.

"Listen, why'd you lay out that stuff?" demanded Reedy, in mock gruffness.

"Well, I wanted Moore and Armstrong to have a chance to crash through, sir," Jimmy replied. "The other side had all the weight, and I thought we'd better use what weight we had, the best way we could.

So then, thinking of that, I asked Les to crash through center——”

“Didn’t know we had a back guard fast enough for that old play,” muttered Reedy. “Never bothered to teach the squad that stuff, and here you pull it and show up my year’s work and the squad as well.”

“Wanted Les to have his chance to crash through——” began Jimmy.

“Yeah, that’s what you said before,” grunted Reedy, watching the game closely. “But it takes more than weight to crash through. Brains, for instance. And look, I suppose you told ’em to line up different on defense, too, hey? Pulled Moore out on the floor and took Armstrong back, to meet the other gang’s weight, hey?”

“Well, I—uh——” faltered Jimmy, not seeing through the coach’s pretense of anger.

“Did you, or not?” demanded Reedy.

“Yes, sir.”

“I thought so,” said the coach shortly.

The game went ding-donging and banging back and forth to a bitter conclusion. Final whistle. Freemans eighteen, Armstrongs twenty-one. Fifteen tired, breathless boys. Fifteen hopeful ones. Would Reedy’s list of eight include——

“Yay, and when he read off the names, whose name was first?” demanded Les, when the three musketeers were back in their room, all of them elated.

“Aw, listen,” began Jimmy. “Don’t make any difference whose name was first. He just happened to write ’em that way.”

“Well, and what did Coach say to me, hey?” exclaimed Billy Armstrong. “An ounce of brains——”

“That’s old Poison Ivy, Jim Byers,” proclaimed Les.

“—beats a pound of beef,” concluded Billy.

“That’s me,” Les stated positively.

"And it's tough on me, because I'm neither," lamented Billy.

"But both," exclaimed Jimmy. "And so's Les. Or we wouldn't have run one-two-three in this eight-horse race. You guys lay off me. I gotta study."

CHAPTER XII

STEP EIGHT

"BUT I can't say much for wrestling," declared Jimmy. "As far as I'm concerned, it is just about the last sport on the list."

"Too rough for you?" asked varsity football Coach Phillips, with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice. Jimmy, walking across the campus toward the gymnasium, had encountered the great man alone.

"Well, no, sir, I think not," Jimmy grinned. "Don't mind——"

"What is it then?" snapped Phillips bruskiy.

"I don't like it because the first thing wrestling demands of you is that you get behind your man," said Jim. "All the best holds, the surest ones, are worked behind your man's back. If that is real sport, I'll eat it," and he flushed in his earnestness. "I'd rather stand up to my man face to face, and——"

"That's good," Coach Phillips chuckled, interrupting. "And it is the tip-off on wrestling. I don't blame you, for I never liked it myself. But I want you to go through with it. Stick it out until spring football practise, understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

"Because I might have to use you next fall on the varsity, and I want you to be tough," the coach explained. "You weigh only one hundred and sixty pounds. Wrestling will harden and toughen your muscles. Can't have any brittle backs in my line-up—fellows easily hurt. Build up your weight, too. How are the studies coming?"

"Not so good," and Jimmy's face fell. "That is,

algebra has about got me down. Can't seem to get through with it."

"Want a tutor? Glad to furnish one," suggested Phillips.

"No, sir, thank you, I'll try to battle it out," said Jimmy. "If I can't lick the first tough subject, I might as well find it out and not try to come to school the rest of the four years."

"Thatta boy," smiled the coach. "Well, keep shoving," and he went along down the walk.

Jimmy continued on his way to the gymnasium where, for half an hour, he pulled and hauled, shoved and twisted, with half a dozen other boys about his own weight. But he had little zest for the workout, and emerged with nothing but a sweat and two or three burns where his skin rubbed hard against the canvas mat.

Byers would not have phrased it in this way, but he found himself confronted by his first real university crisis. If he had been asked how he was getting along he would have grinned and said, merely, "tough goin'." But the fact was he faced a crisis. Algebra baffled him, despite his hard-plugging work on the subject. Wrestling disgusted him, but he had given his word to the football coach that, for the sake of football, he would go through with it. He could not quit cold in algebra, nor could he shrink the wrestling, hard as it was for him. Finally, he faced a third problem.

The fraternity, which he, with Les and Billy, had joined, maintained a strict social discipline. Besides seeing that all its members kept up their studies and took part in athletics or any other campus activity for which they had any aptitude or liking, the fraternity labored to improve the social bearing of its membership. Consequently, headed by a social committee composed of upper classmen, it insisted that all fresh-

men should attend a certain number of dances, "date" co-eds at least twice a month, and call at university and faculty receptions.

Those who disdain the importance of some social training for young cubs may smile at such a procedure but must admit the system has its value. There is at least a small merit attached to the ability to hand a cup of tea to a girl without spilling it over her gown. Only by taking part in social affairs can a youngster learn how to conduct himself.

Les and Billy had been excused from their share of the task of upholding the fraternity socially, along with Jimmy, during football and basketball seasons. But now all three had been called upon by the older boys to "step out," as they put it. Billy, a lover of luxurious living and a shining light in any social company, went to it, as Les said. And Les himself likewise stepped out, willingly enough.

"But I can't afford to give the girls a run-around," protested Jimmy. "They don't want you hanging around on the wall. Gotta spend some money on them, and I haven't the jack to spare. My scholarship doesn't provide for society high life. Besides, I've got to study, and I've got this blamed wrestling on my hands."

"My dear young fellow, don't be uncouth," gibed Les.

"Think of the polish you need," mocked Billy, grinning. Billy was getting himself into his dinner clothes, in preparation for a dance at one of the sorority houses.

"I'll polish you, you big string-bean," declared Jim, advancing across the room toward the taller boy.

"Lay off—you get this shirt dirty and I'll crown you," Billy threatened, seizing the handle of a hair brush and brandishing the weapon.

Jimmy picked up a soiled shoe cloth and pretended an assault on the starched and gleaming shirt-front.

"Who needs polish?" he demanded.

"I do," muttered Billy. "Lay off," and he compromised to save his appearance for the dance.

"All right, then," Jimmy rejoined.

That evening Les, too, went out and Jimmy was left along with his algebra and Heavy Hilligoss, the senior, in their room. Heavy, a medical student, dug deeply into a large fat volume, and paid no attention to the departure of two of the freshmen. Jimmy sat down at the table and opened his algebra text, a modern and modified version of that ancient bugaboo, Charlie Smith, but a version slightly, if any, less difficult than the original. For a moment, before tackling the text, he reflected that Les and Billy were lucky stiffs. The football coach had told Les to practise skipping the rope a few minutes each day, to strengthen his legs. Billy had drawn the mere suggestion that he should eat heartily, drink plenty of milk and try to put weight on his thin frame. Algebra had no terrors for either of them.

"Ho-hummm," sighed Jimmy, and plunged into his work. He studied each of the morrow's problems in turn, and armed with a sharp pencil, engaged each problem, hand to hand, in battle. In turn they repelled his first attack. Crumpled and torn sheets of paper, heavily marked, gave evidence of the conflict. But after each defeat he renewed his onslaught until finally, after two hours intensive effort, he had finished with the five examples.

"Two of 'em ought to be right, anyhow," he muttered as, wearily, he signed his paper and folded it into the text-book for submission in class next day.

"What's 'at?" demanded Heavy Hilligoss, starting up suddenly. "What's all this conversation? How

d'yuh s'pect *me* to study, with you talking alla time?"

"Excuse me," said Jimmy, grinning. "I didn't mean to bother you. But I was just saying that maybe two of the five problems I've just solved will be right."

"H'mm, algebra? Saaay, two out of five won't sell any papers," scoffed Hilligoss. "That'll be forty per cent. Can't pass that way."

"No, but if I get two right, it will be a hundred per cent. improvement," said Jimmy miserably. "One out of five is my average."

"Give yuh a lift?" asked Heavy, closing his book. "Guess I'm through for the night, myself."

"No, thanks," Jimmy replied stiffly. "I'll get 'em myself, or they won't be got, that's all."

"All right, stiff neck," Hilligoss chuckled. "Thatta old fight. But listen, lemme tell yuh something. The committee put it up to me to see that you and Jake are dated up for next Sunday evening. Gotta step out, see?"

"Aw, I don't want to go playing the women," said Jim.

"We've heard that before," declared Heavy. "From you and Jake, both. But if the pair of you haven't got dates by to-morrow night, I'll make 'em for yuh. And then I'll see that you fill 'em, if I have to take the old paddle to you and Jake, even if he is my brother. I'll lay on the wood from here to the house. And if that don't do the job, I'll report back to the committee, and the whole gang will take you two into Kangaroo Court. Some of these guys swing a mean paddle, too, don't think they don't."

"But I don't know any girls——" Jim began.

"Got till to-morrow night to scare up one," warned Heavy. "And I'm gonna find Jake and tell him, too."

As the big fellow pounded out of the room and down the corridor, Jimmy did not know whether to

laugh or cry. The situation appealed to him as being ridiculous. But on the other hand, it supplied another evidence that he seemed to be falling down. Algebra and wrestling were obligations hard to meet, and here he was failing to hold up his end in what the rest of the boys thought to be their social duty.

Plenty of big husky youngsters have broken down and cried under the strain of college algebra. Others have despaired of athletic careers, and still others have suffered because of social shortcomings. Small wonder that Jimmy Byers, afflicted, we might say, with a sharper conscience and a keener desire to meet his duty than some of his fellows, worried over the situation in which he found himself.

He undressed after a time, put on his pajamas and went up-stairs to the third-floor dormitory to bed. But he did not go to sleep at once. Instead, he lay on his back and stared dry-eyed into the darkness. When he finally closed his eyes it was with the blind resolve to keep bucking the line and find a way through his problems.

Coach Tugger Macy opened Jimmy's eyes for him. The head of the wrestling squad and teacher of the grappling classes was a bit of a philosopher in his roughneck way. Watching the boys at work, in pairs, on the big mat in the gymnasium next afternoon, Macy noticed that Jim Byers showed little zest for the sport. Jimmy was pulling and shoving with a short fat youngster, and neither was getting anywhere.

"Here, Byers," said Macy, walking on the mat. "Coach Phillips told me you'd make a wrestler, but you don't show any signs."

"Well, he didn't tell me that," grinned Jimmy dubiously. "He said wrestling would help my football."

"But it won't if you don't get something out of it,"

Macy exclaimed. "Here, do you know anything about wrestling? Get any kick out of it?"

"No, both times," Jimmy grinned.

"Well, listen,—what d'yuh s'pose the name means,—catch as catch can?" Macy demanded. "I'll tell yuh. It means yuh can take any hold you like, instead of some hold that's prescribed, like in football. All right, that means yuh can fool the other guy. And he can fool you. He can feint to make you take the hold he wants yuh to, and then he can turn it to his advantage. Or you can make him think y'r gonna take a certain hold, and fool him by takin' another. See? Just like life, wraslin's got more'n one handle. The guy that wins knows how to juggle the handles, see? Ever'thing's got more'n one handle. All right, it's a question of grabbin' the right one,—the one the other guy is not ready for yuh to grab. See?"

"Never looked at it in that way," Jimmy mumbled.

"There's sense in it," proclaimed Macy. "Here, lemme show yuh. Square off, here. Now then, let's go."

So saying, he stepped over and reached out his arms. Jimmy did likewise wonderingly. Macy suddenly stretched out his left arm as if to grasp Jimmy's right. Jim quickly seized the coach's wrist, thinking to bend it upward. At the same time he stepped forward, with the idea of getting to Macy's left and then behind him for a quarter-nelson hold. But he did not finish his plan. Instead, he felt himself jerked toward Macy, and then the coach grasped his left leg with his right hand and lifted Jimmy into the air. Before Jim knew what was happening he had gone over Macy's head and was stretched out almost breathless on his back, a victim of the flying mare hold.

Feeling rather helpless and silly, Jimmy grinned as he lay flat and looked up at the coach.

"Now then," demanded Macy. "What were yuh tryin' to do?"

Jimmy explained his idea about the quarter-nelson, a hold requiring a hand under the opponent's armpit and up around his neck.

"Yeah, and that was all right, too," said Macy. "But listen, I had an idea myself. I wanted yuh to grab that wrist, see, and yuh fell for it. I was all set for yuh, because I was one think ahead, see? I fainted. Yuh grabbed the handle I wanted yuh to grab. That's wraslin'. Now then, try it with this other boy. Remember, there's more to wraslin' than just gettin' a hold and pullin'. Use yer head. Just like yuh do in life, or in school, here, or football, see?"

So saying, Coach Macy abandoned Jimmy and turned to some other candidates. Jimmy lay on his back a moment and then, grinning again, got to his feet. In a flash, from Macy's crude words, he had got the idea of wrestling, and, at the same time, a new slant on life itself. Two minutes later, Jimmy had his fat opponent flat on the canvas; and a little later was generously showing how he had thrown his man.

"Atta boy," exclaimed Macy. "Not such a bad game after all, once yuh get the hang of it. Hey? And it's just like life. More'n one handle."

Jimmy chuckled all the way to the fraternity house over the lesson he had just learned, at the same time resolving that wrestling had some elements of sport in it after all. Arrived at the Alpha Omega house, he met Heavy Hilligoss.

"Got yuh dates for Sunday evening," Hilligoss said. "You and Jake. And you be set to go, see? Two nice women at the Eta Phi house. No flat tires."

"All right," said Jimmy. "I'll tell Jake."

"Wha—what's 'at?" demanded Heavy, who had expected further opposition from Jimmy.

"I said all right, and I'll tell Jake," Jimmy repeated.

"He's still balkin', but he's got to fill the date," pronounced Heavy.

"I'll tell him."

"Well, you be blamed careful what you tell him," Heavy warned.

After dinner Jimmy, still thinking of the lesson he had learned from the crude Tugger Macy, did talk to Jake Hilligoss. And remembering that there is more than one handle to every problem, Jimmy used tactics with Jake that convinced his husky, freshman buddy the thing to do was to fill the dates. That done, Jimmy tackled his old enemy, Charlie Smith, on Smith's favorite battle-ground, the text-book in college algebra. Here, too, Jimmy remembered Tugger Macy's lecture. Instead of plunging blindly into each problem, he leaned back in his chair and considered the various ways in which that problem might be solved. He quit butting his head into a stone wall, figuratively speaking. Rather, he sought the right handle.

"It all depends on how you take hold," said Jimmy, an hour later.

"What's that?" asked Heavy Hilligoss, looking up from a medical text-book.

"I was thinking about algebra. Got it licked," Jimmy explained in triumph. "If these five problems are not solved right, I'll eat 'em. Learned how on the wrestling mat this afternoon."

"Are you crazy?" demanded Hilligoss.

"Nope, just happy. And I'm gonna get some of the sleep back, that I've lost these many weeks over algebra," said Jimmy. "Going to bed. *Good night.*"

"Oh, gosh, I gotta keep grinding on this stuff," lamented Hilligoss.

Jimmy, young Jake Hilligoss and Heavy went out on the enforced party Sunday evening. It was so easily done that Heavy, after having contemplated many dire means, was somewhat suspicious of his freshmen. But they acted as if society was their dish,—en route to the sorority house.

Monday morning Jimmy, in company with Armstrong and Les, crossed the campus en route to the algebra class. Algebra had proved simple for Les and Billy, but they missed Jimmy's usual pre-class groanings over Charlie Smith.

"Still think you'll flunk this stuff, Jim?" asked Les.

"Nope, got it licked," said Jimmy. "Learned how to whip it in wrestling class. Handed in five problems Thursday, and got a hundred on my paper."

"Learned how in wrestling?" echoed Les incredulously.

"Yeah, learned to look for the right hold," Jim explained, grinning.

"Getta half-nelson or a toe-hold on the old problem, hey, Jim?" laughed Billy. "But say, how about the society stuff. Got it whipped yet?"

"Sure."

"But you had a date last night," protested Les.

"And now they've got a notice on the bulletin board that you and Jake can't have any more dates. Absolutely forbidden," said Billy.

"Well, if you call *that* whipping society——" began Les.

"Surest thing you know," Jimmy grinned. "Jake and I didn't want any dates. But they made us fill 'em. All right. *Now* we won't have any more."

"But how come?" insisted Les.

"Well, I learned how to whip that game in wrestling, too," said Jim. "Wrestling is like life. Catch as catch can. Grab the hold the other fellow don't

want you to grab. Make him take the one you want him to take."

"Say, talk sense," protested Billy.

"Or I'll grab hold of your neck and twist it," Les threatened. "Just like life, too. Come through, kid."

"Will you guys keep your traps shut? On the level? All right," said Jim. "They'd kill us if they found out. But Jake and I didn't want dates. Made us take 'em. Proposition,—how to get out of it. All right. We act so dumb on this one date, they say we disgrace the chapter. Forbid us to have any more. Q. E. D. Just like algebra. Just like wrestling. Just like life. Catch as catch can, see? And now I'll have plenty of time to study, outside reading, baseball and football practise."

"Kill him, he's too smart to live," said Billy.

"Yeah, and if we had time right now, I'd crown you," laughed Les.

Together the three musketeers went up the steps of biology hall to confront Charlie Smith in algebra class.

CHAPTER XIII

NERVE VS. NERVES

OCTOBER and November Saturdays are glorious days! College bands, snake-dances, yell leaders, chalk-lines, pretty co-eds, drop-kicks, end runs, fur coats, bright colored ribbons,—all these blend to form the picture days of football. The picture days are the days we remember, looking backward, and anticipate, looking into the future.

But there are other days in football, days outside the gridiron season proper, which form the props for the vivid autumn picture. These are the days of spring training. Fiction is not, ordinarily, written of spring training days. It lacks romance, color, snap and dash. No cheer leaders, no bands, no great crowds of rooters urge on the athlete during spring training. His work is dull. He plods and grinds unendingly to no applause, and to no accompaniment save his own thoughts and the harsh words of his coach.

The Duke of Wellington said Waterloo was won on the schoolboy fields of Eton. In the same way, November football victories are achieved in the monotonous, tiresome days of spring training. Great poems have been written of the romance that was Waterloo, but none of the schoolboy fields of Eton. Most tales of the gridiron have to do with stirring events on brilliant autumn afternoons, but here is the story of a sound football victory achieved during the drab days of early spring.

"No, no, Byers, not that way," yelled Head Coach

Phillips. "Are you playing tag with that tackle, or do you really want to take him out?"

Jimmy said nothing, for one does not find easy replies to the sarcasm of a coach. And besides, Jimmy, on the varsity squad at last, saw a place on the regular eleven ahead of him and knew better than to risk ruining his chance with back talk.

"Well, then, *hit him*," snapped Phillips, as if Jimmy had answered. "Don't just touch him and slide past. *Hit him*, turn him in. So your ball carrier can run *past* tackle, not into him."

And then the off-tackle formation was called again, and Jimmy, lining up at quarter-back, once more essayed to crash the tackle in toward center, so that his half-back, Les Moore, could slice past for a gain. And again, and yet again, they repeated the formation until they were sick of it, *but* well-nigh perfect in its execution.

"Moore, Moore, if you're gonna take three or four steps before booting 'at old ball," Phillips wailed during punting practise, "yuh might as well go on and walk around the block. Too late to kick, then. Three or four steps means givin' them the ball, for they'll block it. Here, look,—snap, one, *two*, and on the *two*, yuh boot! See? Now, try it again."

Whereupon the sturdy-legged Les renewed his efforts to get away long, high, spiral punts with more speed and fewer steps. He kicked and booted for half an hour, until his right foot felt like fifty pounds of lead. And wondered whether he was making any improvement. The reason he did not find out was that Coach Phillips had transferred his attention to the ends, running down the field under the kicks.

"Armstrong, playin' ring-around-arys?" yelled Phillips at Billy Armstrong, third of the three musketeers of Lockerbie Hall and Jordan's freshman

class. "Run past y'r man, turn around, and sneak up behind him, hey? Thought it was a long kick? Well, why didn't yuh look up to *see* if it was? Don't expect Moore to kick seventy yards, every time. Or any time. Stop, look,—*then* cut in and tackle, see?"

And so it went, hour after hour, and day after day, for a long grueling month. Phillips, a keen sarcastic type, drove his squad hard. Always a driving taskmaster, he redoubled his efforts this spring because he saw bright prospects ahead for Jordan in the fall. Only four members of his first-string line-up were graduating, and there was plenty of good material for the four vacant positions. The team had made a strong showing in the past season, and promised to do better. Phillips overlooked no possibility of improving his squad.

In cold weather and warm, rain, snow and sunshine, he labored with his squad from the middle of March to mid-April, driving, coaxing, begging, encouraging and always teaching. He hammered and hammered on fundamental little things which, taken together, make up the big things that are football. Jimmy worked six afternoons learning to hit a tackle with his right hip, as well as he naturally hit with his left. Les labored the whole month trying to perfect a quicker kick to the point where it was automatic and habitual. Armstrong ran his long legs off down the field under punts, and then, when he felt he could run no more, put in some time catching forward passes in full stride.

Incentive? None, except to develop personal prowess, and prepare to hold up the honor of Jordan on the gridiron the next fall. Tackling practise, charging, blocking, signal work, actual scrimmage followed each other in steady rotation. Every man did his best, but it was hard—the harder because every man's

opponent was his friend, not an enemy. And yet they were all rivals, too, striving for places on the eleven.

Before the month of intensive work ended, nerves were on edge, keen tempers were jagged and rough. The boys worried and struggled all afternoon, and fretted in off hours because they felt they were getting nowhere. Coach Phillips struggled, worried and fretted all afternoon, but smiled to himself in off hours. Jordan, he figured, was going somewhere in football.

There you have in a nutshell the spring football situation at Jordan. Cracking the nutshell and taking out the goodies, we find Jimmy Byers and his story. Jimmy had won the regular quarter-back job on the freshman first team, and attracted the attention of the varsity coach by his heady work in scrimmage against the varsity.

"You can clean up that job," Les and Billy assured him when they reported for spring training with the varsity squad. "Wilkins graduates. Mulkern, his sub, is a flop."

"Maybe, but he's a senior," said Jimmy. "Had two years to get ready, besides his freshman year."

"You should worry. Go get 'at old quarter-backin' job," they said.

"Well, you guys better promote yourselves," Jim grinned. "You'll have a handful apiece. If we could all get across——"

"Oh, boy!" exclaimed the other two, in unison.

Jimmy reported and buckled into his work with a will. He labored hard to pick up and master all the points shot at him by Phillips, although he sometimes felt resentful of the constant stream of sarcasm and criticism. It seemed to him that Phillips must figure him hopeless, and he said so, to his buddies.

"Rats, he uses you most of the time in signals and scrimmage, instead of Mulkern," they reassured him.

"If he didn't count on yuh, he wouldn't be wasting his time with yuh, see?"

Jimmy returned to his task with renewed spirit, and seemed to be clinching the position as quarter-back. Then, in the middle of the training season, Dory Hawkins appeared as candidate for the same job, and Jimmy's real battle began. Hawkins, by his very appearance, would have scared out a less courageous candidate than Jim Byers, for he stood five feet eleven, weight one hundred and eighty pounds, and looked the picture of the superperfect quarter-back. He had subbed one year under the brilliant Wilkins and then dropped out of school. Enthusiastic alumni persuaded him to return, so that he might play quarter on the varsity and fill the gap caused by the graduation of Wilkins. They knew nothing of Jim Byers. Neither did Hawkins, who took it for granted he had the job as quarter-back sewed up.

"Well, here I am, Coach," Hawkins announced, expecting Phillips to fall on his neck for joy.

"Get in shape to play," Phillips said. "I can use you."

Hawkins worked out a few days, and then began to yearn for a place in the line-up. But Phillips kept him waiting, and continued using Jimmy on his first-string eleven trying out plays. Hawkins became impatient. He ignored Mulkern, but he saw Jimmy constantly working at quarter.

"Huh, you're the rhiny," he sneered at Jimmy, meeting him on the way from the gym to the field one afternoon, "I've got to beat out of a job, hey?"

"If you want to play quarter, yeah," Jimmy grinned.

"That's what I'm *gonna* play," snapped Hawkins aggressively.

"Help yourself," said Jim.

Now, Coach Phillips, like every wise coach in modern football, knew the value of having not one but two or three men ready to play any position. He rejoiced that Hawkins was available, and after making the big fellow wait long enough to take some of the cocksureness out of him, began using him part of the time. He had his own notion as to the respective merits of Byers and Hawkins, but he kept his opinion to himself and began planning for the fall campaign on the basis of two quarter-backs instead of one.

For all Jimmy and Hawkins knew, they were fighting it out for the job as first-string quarter-back, and they made a fine battle of it. In every part of quarter-back play in which weight helps, Hawkins had the advantage. He took in tackles more effectively, and when running interference was more sure of putting out his man. Long striding, and stoutly built, he was a hard man to bring down when tackled, but Jimmy was almost as speedy afoot, and somewhat shiftier. Hawkins threw the long forward pass beautifully, and punted fairly well. But he was not mentally alert enough for the snappy, short-passing game that must be worked with the long passes, and his punting ability did not count in his struggle with Jim, because both Les Moore and Babcock, another varsity back, were far better punters. And Jimmy, thanks to his skill in basketball, was no slouch at the forward-passing job.

Both tackled well, as safety men, with Hawkins holding a slight edge because he hit harder. Catching punts, both were good. Running them back, Jimmy had a craftier dodging sense to pit against the big fellow's greater speed. In short, the two seemed evenly matched in everything that could be measured in spring training, this despite the greater weight and speed of Dory Hawkins.

It is easy to compare the two boys on paper, but the tests through which they battled, side by side yet against each other, were far from easy. Day after day, hour after hour, they struggled, each to show himself a better man than the other. Pace by pace, they fought to show their abilities, and the battle told on tired nervous systems. Coach Phillips gave no hint of his preference, but held them in competition, whetting them for keener and better work on the varsity. Two good quarter-backs instead of possibly one who would be passable vied before him. He rejoiced.

"Brains, temperament, nerve," he thought. "These will decide. But it will take games to tell. Still, I wish I knew which to give the edge——"

And then, as the training season drew to a close with the increasing warmth of the spring days, he found out where the balance weighed. His discovery came with the climax of the feud, bitter but unspoken, between his two quarter-backs.

"Ends and tackles over here," called Phillips, opening practise. "We'll practise going down under punts. Moore and Babcock, punting. Byers and Hawkins, down to receive the kicks. Heydon, go down to block for them. All right, let's go."

Moore and Babcock alternated, punting, and Jimmy and the husky Hawkins took turn about receiving the punts. Each, with the stubby Heydon blocking off the nearest man, tried to run back the ball. With four men coming down the field, each under orders to make the tackle, and only one blocker, it is strenuous work for the receiver. At best, the quarter-back has his task cut out for him. Punt-catching in a game requires more concentrated, crystallized nerve than any duty in football.

The safety man dares not take his eyes from the soaring pigskin. He must stand stock-still, if it is

coming to him, or gage exactly the spot where it will come down, and get there unerringly, to snatch the leather and be away with it. Fumbles are taboo. And yet, the safety man knows that, while he eyes the ball, from one to half a dozen men may be set to crash him the instant he gets his hands on the leather. It is a situation to try the courage and imagination of the stoutest-hearted athlete.

Dory Hawkins, big and strong, poised for each catch as if he had no idea of being tackled. He seemed as calm as he would be on receiving a piece of custard pie across the dinner-table. Standing still and relaxed the vital element in his job seemed never to occur to him. Once he had the ball, he swung into stride, and took the bumps as they came.

But Jimmy Byers, smaller and less able to withstand the buffetings of ends and tackles, commanded no such indifference. Even when the ball came directly to him, he fidgeted nervously. He did a jig-step with his feet, and swung his arms. He gave the impression of fright, or at least, of uncertainty. Once he had his hands on the ball, this impression dissolved, for he invariably dashed ahead with precision. But the contrast between him and Hawkins was very marked. Hawkins, standing behind Jimmy at ease when it was Jimmy's turn to take the punt, laughed.

"Say, what yuh dancin' for?" he asked roughly. "Scared? All nerves, hey?"

But the ball was coming, and so were two tackles and two ends. Jimmy could pay no attention to the raucous comment from the rear. He fidgeted and danced while the ball descended in a great arc and then, as it tunked into the pocket he made of his arms and chest, did a quick double-shuffle with his feet and was off. An end and a tackle came at him from either side, closing in quickly like a pair of pinchers. Like

a flash, Jimmy sprinted straight up the field, between them, hoping by a burst of speed to escape. Luckily, he did so, leaving the hapless forwards to crash together and go down in a heap with Heydon, his blocker.

Instead of razzing the ends and tackles for letting him get away, Coach Phillips turned his attention to Hawkins. He had heard the big fellow's words from where he stood.

"What's the idea, Hawkins?" he asked, walking toward him. "Think Byers is yellow, do you?"

"Oh, well, it looks like it," said Hawkins, wishing he had not been overheard. "Fidgets around there under the ball. Nerves, I guess." Of a sudden he assumed an air of superiority. "These kids get excited, I guess," he added, with an effort at charity.

"You should worry about the kids," said Phillips, "before you hold up your end. Haven't seen you showing up this boy, yet."

"Aw, now——" Hawkins began.

"Here, if you think this kid's scared, you go up there and come down under the next kick. See if he's scared of *you*. How's that?"

Coach Phillips suddenly decided to make a sharp test of the two boys in real competition, and the rash remarks of Dory Hawkins justified it. He sent Hawkins up the field, and told Jimmy to receive the next kick. But he told him nothing more, nor did he say anything to Heydon, blocking. He called up the field to Billy Armstrong to come down under the punt at one end, with Hawkins on the other, the two to come without tackles. Then he took up a position to one side of Jimmy Byers.

Jimmy, under orders, did not question the move. It was just another punt to catch, with him. But Hawkins, angry over having been caught by the coach in the act of razzing his rival, smarted. Put on his

mettle, he decided to show the coach, and show up Jimmy Byers at the same time. He crouched for a sprinter's start. Back went the ball to Les Moore, punting, and he was off flying. So, opposite him, was Billy Armstrong. Les smelled a mouse, and tried to place his kick, sending it to Billy's side of the field. Tunk! came the report of his shoe crashing the pig-skin, and in the next stride Billy and Hawkins both cast fleeting glances over their shoulders to sight the ball's course. Billy held straight ahead. Hawkins swerved, to cross the field.

Jimmy scurried across to meet the ball, and set himself to catch it. Heydon knew Armstrong as a faster man than Hawkins, and saw he had a shorter run. He shot up to cut down Billy. Hawkins put on speed, and came at Jimmy flying. Jim fidgeted, shuffled his feet and, as the ball came down, did his little double-shuffle again. He hooked the ball, and dug in his toes for a dash straight ahead. But he encountered Billy, who had jumped over Heydon when Heydon dived at him. Quickly he dodged to the right, and smash! He encountered a long, hard-flying tackle by the heavy Hawkins.

Down they went in a rolling heap, but Jim kept driving with his feet. Almost the instant he hit the ground, he was moving again, for Hawkins had hit him hard but failed to pin him with his arms.

"Yelluh, quit crawlin'," exclaimed Hawkins angrily. And at the same moment, swung a hard clinched fist at Jimmy's head. His fist bounced off Jim's headgear and did not hurt him, although he did drive Jimmy's head against the sod. Then a young avalanche hit him, and knocked him rolling off Byers and to one side.

"Can the dirty work," came a voice. It was that of Armstrong. He jerked at Hawkins to pull him to his feet.

"Let him alone, Bill," said Jimmy, dropping the ball, and rising. "I'll take care of him myself." He walked resolutely at the bigger chap, who put up his hands, and intended to hit him. But he recovered control of his temper in time, and dropped his fists.

"Yelluh, I said," muttered Hawkins.

"Is *that* so?" demanded Jimmy, jumping forward and swinging his right fist to his rival's chin before Hawkins could block the blow.

"Here, here, here," yelled Coach Phillips, coming over on the run. "No fighting! What's the row?"

"This big stiff slugged Byers when he was down, sir," said Billy.

"And I said he was yelluh," muttered Hawkins.

"Still think so?" snapped Phillips, trying to repress a smile.

"Aw, look at the way he fidgets and shakes when the ball's comin' to him," growled Hawkins, sick over the turn in events. "Nerves, I said."

"There is no nerve, where there are no nerves," pronounced Phillips quietly. "Say, boy," he turned to Jimmy, "are you nervous when the ball's coming at you? Were you scared of Hawkins?"

"Sure," and Jimmy grinned. "Yeah, but I guess I managed to get over it."

"That," said Phillips, "is courage, Hawkins. How do you prove courage, unless there is something to fear? Takes nerve to overcome nerves, see?"

For the remaining three days of spring training, Jim Byers worked at quarter-back in all the signal and formation trials. His defeat of nervousness proved his biggest victory thus far. But it was well for him that he was thinking of the situation in front of his eyes. He could not have met it if he had been looking away into the future, dreaming of a place on the varsity,—up, up the stairs.

CHAPTER XIV

NINTH STEP

JIMMY left the great Memorial Library at three o'clock of a late April afternoon and, glad to have finished two hours of steady reading, started for the gymnasium to dress for freshman baseball practise, and in order that he might not be late took a short-cut. Instead of going across the campus by the tortuous winding path that seemed to seek out every hill and gully, he turned along the avenue past the Soda Keg.

That institution, home of hot dogs and hot chocolate in winter, was as busy as ever now, doling out rich ice-cream drinks and dishes to the between-meals appetites of the undergraduate body. Lazy students loafed at the Soda Keg in large numbers. Stories and gossip were bandied about the crowd. Jim, hustling along, had his head down, his thoughts running from the text he had been reading to the approaching baseball workout, and then to his unsolicited feud with big Dory Hawkins. He was hardly conscious of happenings on the sidewalk in front of the Soda Keg.

If he had heard the mingled laughter and hum of voices from the loafing students, he would have noticed, too, the sudden hush as he approached. But he was wishing devoutly he had never seen Hawkins and so noticed neither the noise nor the ensuing quiet. Head down, he hurried on. Why had Hawkins roughed him in spring football practise? Why, thereby, had he lost his temper and smashed the bigger boy on the chin?

Then, abruptly, he bumped into some one on the sidewalk directly in front of the Soda Keg.

"I beg your pardon," Jim exclaimed quickly.

"Saay, why don't you look where you're going?" he heard a rough voice demanding.

Looking up, he saw it was his rough-and-tumble rival, Hawkins. Surprised, and sorry for the encounter because he wished to avoid trouble, Jimmy hesitated. Out of the corner of his eye, he noted a group of loungers waiting with expectant air. Friends of Hawkins, he surmised.

"Well," growled the burly Hawkins, assuming a threatening attitude.

Determined to avoid a fight if possible, Jimmy took a step to his left, and essayed to pass Hawkins so that he might go on about his business. Boys in the crowd chuckled aloud. Jimmy flushed, and encountered Hawkins again, the bigger chap having slouched directly in front of him.

"All right, let him have it," muttered Jimmy to himself, suddenly angry. He set himself stealthily and then with a spring from his toes, crashed into Hawkins with his shoulder. He caught Hawkins off balance, and flung him off the sidewalk into the gutter, Dory being hard put to keep his feet. And then he went on his way down the sidewalk, while the loafers looked on in surprise.

"Saay, *you*," roared the angry Hawkins, "I'll get you——"

"Me, too?" Jimmy heard a familiar voice interrupting the bully.

"And me?" this was Billy Armstrong, echoing the question of Les Moore.

Hawkins, though disgruntled at the turn in events, evidently dropped his quarrel in the presence of the other two musketeers. At any rate, Jimmy, proceed-

ing down the sidewalk, heard no more. Partly because he was excited over the occurrence, and partly because he feared he might be late for practise, he shuffled into his dog-trot.

Soon he heard whistling behind him, but he thought somebody must be whistling for a dog, and paid no heed. Then he heard voices calling.

"Yay, Doggie."

"Hi, Jim!" His chums rarely used these nicknames.

Turning around, he saw Les and Billy hurrying to catch up with him. Both were grinning. He waited for them. As they approached, both turned mock serious.

"It was a lucky thing we came along," said Les to Billy. "If we hadn't, that big stiff would have torn the kid's knob right off his shoulders."

"Yes, but he wouldn't have missed it," Billy replied. "The thing that surprised me was his jumping into Hawkins. That took some nerve."

"C'mon, Papa and Mama," grinned Jimmy, ignoring the chaff. "I knew you'd be around to watch over me. And be proud to call me your own. But say," falling into step with his pals, "what were you two doing in the Soda Keg?"

"Well, Billy wanted a double dose of chocolate and cream," Les explained, "and I just went along to see that he took only one double."

"Why, you poor sugar inhaler," exclaimed Billy indignantly, taking a dig at Moore's ribs with a hard fist.

"If you two saps keep on training at the Keg, you'll have a fat chance to play some baseball around here," accused Jimmy.

"Well, didn't Phillips tell me to put on some weight?" Billy demanded.

"Not that kind."

"Say, what's the idea always tangling with this Hawkins?" asked Les. "He's been talking around ever since you socked him on the jaw in football practise, that he's gonna get you plenty. Braggin' about it back there at the Keg just before you came along."

"He's got twenty-five pounds on you, too," chimed in Billy, glad to change the subject and get away from his dereliction in training.

"I couldn't help it, the way things happened," Jimmy protested. "I'm not looking for trouble with him, but what did he want to pull that stunt for?"

They hurried along. Les renewed his warning to Jimmy to stay away from Hawkins. The big fellow, he said, had a reputation as a bruiser and a roughneck. Brought back to school by some alumni for the purpose of playing football, Hawkins seemed to be carrying on like a saloon bouncer in a mining-camp.

"Next fall he'll be out there trying to beat you out of the job at quarter," said Les. "He's big and heavy and dirty. Believe me, he'll lay on you if he gets a chance. You're coaxing a bump, all I got to say."

"Breedin' a bloody, bloody scab," added Billy Armstrong. "But as long as we older, bigger fellows can look after you——"

"Aw, can the chin-chin," growled Jimmy. "Saay, Billy, has Coach said anything to you about your pitching?" This was as they climbed the long flight of steps to the gymnasium door.

"Only that if I don't get some control before long, he'll send me back to the minor leagues," grinned Billy. "Says I've got enough speed and a good break, but I'm too wild to pitch anywhere except on a hundred-acre farm."

"Any chance to get in against the varsity this afternoon?" asked Jim.

"No. I'll be as far from that game as San Fran-

cisco is from Boston," Billy lamented, "unless all the other rhinies get knocked out of the box."

They entered the gymnasium, and proceeded to the freshman dressing-room. Half an hour later they were on rhiny field, going through preliminary practise. Coach Phillips, master of varsity football, fitted into the Jordan athletic system by coaching the freshman baseball team. He directed the workout.

"Snap into it, boys," he yelled. "Show some pep. Let's see who starts against the varsity. Here, Byers, how's your whip?" and he smashed a hard grounder down the third base-line. Jimmy pounced on the ball and came up with it, straightening and whipping to first base at the same instant. "Nice peg. Home with it. Down to second,—thatta old whip, Moore." This last, to big Les, working out as catcher.

For some fifteen minutes, Coach Phillips kept the infield hard at it, warming up the boys for their battle with the varsity. A five-inning contest, scheduled as a primer for the varsity's struggle next day with Michigan, was on the program. Phillips, a great believer in actual competition, rather than lackadaisical going-through-the-motion stuff, wanted his youngsters to give the Jordan nine a stiff struggle. But under all his enthusiasm, he seemed to be preoccupied. He kept an eye on Jimmy Byers, flashing about third base, throughout the practise session. A shame, he thought, the kid could not be ten pounds heavier, and an inch taller. More rugged. Make a star quarter for next year, maybe. Seemed to have the nerve,—but you never can tell. Got the head,—but the old insides?

"Last chance for me to find out," he mused. "See how he holds up at third base. Leave him in there, and see what he does."

Subconsciously, in his sleep, at meal-times, and even during the excitement of baseball, Phillips

thought football, planned football. He wanted a copper-riveted, shock-proof, nervy, brainy quarter-back to guide his next eleven. Was it the husky Hawkins, or this sawed-off, shock-headed little rhiny? Spring football workouts had ended with the job still a toss-up between the two boys. It was great stuff to have not one, but two, quarter-backs. On the other hand, there ought to be an edge. Who had it? Jimmy on the hot corner—but enough of the coach's musings.

Suffice it to say that if there is any position in athletics that is designed to try the heart and soul of an athlete, it is third base. Professional ball players call it the hot corner. Why? Because balls hit down the third base-line are usually hard smashes. When they are not, they are frequently bunts. Your third baseman must be fast enough and strong enough to break down hard-hit liners, and alert enough to come in quickly for bunts. He does not always know what is coming. Set for a smash, he may have to tear in for a sacrifice. Coming in for a bunt, he may encounter a terrific liner whistling at his face. Balls hit to the short-stop or second baseman have a little more time to spend their speed, because they are farther from the plate. Only left-handed batters habitually pull their drives down the first base-line. Too, the third-baseman guards the last post before the plate is reached. Plays there are snappy. Throws are swift. Hot corner is right.

If any of all this analysis was in the mind of Jimmy Byers, he gave no sign of it. Rather, he scooped grounders and snapped up bunts as if engaged in a little game of checkers. Coach Phillips, watching him, hoped the test would come in the heat of a game. He wanted a copper-riveted, shock-proof, nervy, brainy quarter-back. The hot corner might be a good place to find him.

An assistant manager, on the run from varsity field, advised that the big nine was ready for the game. Coach Phillips called in his squad, and adjourned the session to the diamond atop the hill, behind the gymnasium. On the way, his rhinies grouped around him, he called off his line-up. Billy Armstrong felt disappointed at not being named to pitch, but Jimmy thrilled to hear himself designated for third base, and Les Moore whooped when he was called out as catcher. The remainder of the line-up is immaterial, except for the fact that it included big Farmer Wilson, a burly two-hundred-twenty-pound chap, as pitcher.

Arrived at varsity field, the rhinies found the big team leisurely preparing for the last workout before tackling Michigan's Wolverines. Coach Phillips kept his boys moving about so they would not get chilled by inactivity, but he found time to call Byers to him.

"Listen, boy," he said, "I've just heard about your run-in with Hawkins. I don't want any fighting among my football men, see? And, kid," lowering his voice so that others might not hear, "stay away from him. He's a tough hard guy. Take care of yourself, but don't borrow any trouble."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

"What happened this time?" asked the coach.

"Oh, nothing much," said Jim. "He got in my way over at the Keg and seemed to want to start a fight. I just shoved past him, that's all."

"Well, let him alone," Coach Phillips replied, and smiled inwardly at the boy's modesty. He had heard that Jim almost stood the big fellow on his head in the gutter.

Jimmy wondered at the warning, given at this particular moment, until he noticed the varsity lining up afield. Big Dory Hawkins took his place at second base. Jimmy had not known Hawkins was a baseball

player. He wondered how the news of his encounter at the Soda Keg had reached the diamond so quickly. And he hoped that there would be no entanglements, at least during the game.

"There's our little friend," whispered Les to Jimmy. "Plays baseball. All-round tough baby, hey?" And he grinned in reassuring fashion while, squatted behind the rhiny bench, he warmed up with big Farmer Wilson. Jimmy, passing bat in hand toward the plate as rhiny lead-off, grinned back.

"Well, well, well, who's child is this?" yelled Hawkins, from his place in the infield. "First up, first out! Roll one down here, kid!"

Jimmy, somewhat nervous in his first tilt with the varsity, watched a strike and then a ball before he swung.

"I'll help y' out, kid," roared Hawkins, a talky player. "Use y'r bat."

The third being good, Jimmy swung and smashed a crisp grounder to the short-stop's right. He wheeled and sprinted, but the varsity short-stop got him by a nice stop and snappy throw to first. As he pulled up and turned back from his sprint, he met Hawkins, who had come over to back up on the throw.

"I'll get you yet, fresh guy," said Dory angrily.

Jimmy merely grinned.

Neither of them knew it, but Coach Phillips was watching. He liked Jim Byers all the better for that grin. Maybe the boy had the stuff. Copper-riveted quarter-back . . .

This one instance was the closest the two rivals came to an actual encounter until the last inning. Meantime, a real, ding-dong struggle had developed. The freshmen were not able to hit Martin, the varsity's second-string pitcher, consistently. Farmer Wilson walloped a resounding three-bagger to center field in

the third inning with two out, but Jimmy could not help him home. In the fourth, big Les Moore crashed a line drive to left for two bases, but the next two hitters left him stranded at second despite his noisy pleas for help. The varsity could not touch Wilson. The burly fellow had no curve ball worth mentioning, but he did have tremendous speed, and his ball had a hop that helped baffle the Jordan swingers. Moore, behind the bat with his hand, his arm and his whole body burning with Wilson's speed, kept up an enthusiastic line of chatter, and the rhinies fought through with a tight defense.

At the end of the fifth inning neither team had been able to score. Coach Phillips rejoiced over his rhinies. The varsity coach wanted his nine to taste victory before tackling the redoubtable Wolverines next day, and therefore asked for an extra inning, although it was growing late.

"You're on, and we'll take you," grinned Phillips. "C'mon, boys, let's pack this game away. Byers, up."

Jimmy advanced to the plate. He had been thrown out by the short-stop, had flied once to center field, and had been safe once on a varsity error. As he took his place in the batter's box, he figured the varsity must know him for a swinger. He therefore decided to wait. And wait he did. Ball one. Ball two. Strike one. Jimmy looked 'em over. Strike two. Ball three. Jimmy looked 'em over. Resolved to hit, if he had to,—but no, ball four. He walked.

Coach Phillips decided to play for one run. He ordered the next hitter to sacrifice, and Jimmy nodded at the signal. But the next man, trying to bunt on the first ball pitched, popped a miserable little fly to Martin, the pitcher. Still trying for one run, Phillips ordered Jimmy to steal, figuring that either Moore or the clean-up hitter might produce a hit to bring him home.

Jimmy acknowledged orders, and nervously edged himself into position for a flying getaway.

Nervous over invading the territory of the husky Hawkins? Far from it. Jimmy was thinking of Hawkins, wondering why the big fellow had to carry personal spite into his athletics. But nervous? Not at all. He was in the game with all his being. Inch by inch he squirmed down the line, away from first, toward second. And then Martin, refusing to believe the despised rhinies would try to steal, wound up and pitched. Jimmy was off like a flash, digging in his spikes with the speed of a pneumatic riveter. At full tilt he raised his eyes to appraise the situation. And then he saw his enemy.

Big Dory, confident of his bulk, swaggering with his nerve, stood squarely over the bag, awaiting the throw from the catcher. A contemptuous grin played on his face. He stooped over to take the ball, coming on the near side of the bag, knee high, sure of a put-out. It would be close, but he had the bag, covered, and the kid blocked. Jimmy, sensing Dory's plan to block, did not hesitate. He knew the base-line belonged to him. He flung himself into a long, twisting slide, spikes straight for the canvas.

"Aaayohh," yelled Hawkins, clutching the rifle-like throw from the catcher and then, losing his nerve at the last instant, leaping into the air to avoid Jimmy's spikes. He held the ball, but did not try to tag his man. Jimmy relaxed,—for a fraction of a second, and then scrambled hastily to protect himself. Hawkins came down with the spikes of one shoe on Jimmy's ankle.

"Whaddayuh try to spike me for?" he demanded angrily, leaning down and trying to jerk Jimmy to his feet. "I'll knock y'r block off for that! What's the big idea?"

"Runner's safe," announced the umpire, coming down on the run. "Here, boy, hurt?"

"Nope," grinned Jimmy, lying, because his ankle felt as if it had been hacked with a knife. He clambered to his feet.

"Hawkins, that didn't look so good——" began the umpire.

"He didn't mean to do it," Jimmy interrupted. But as he spoke, he looked at Hawkins, and very deliberately winked. The big fellow flushed, and bit his lip. If Coach Phillips could have heard, he would have scored one for Jimmy. But Jimmy scored one for himself an instant later. Praying that big Les Moore could come through with a hit and take him out of the Hawkins bailiwick before he might have to tangle with Dory again, his prayer was answered. Big Les leaned against Martin's fast ball and crashed a liner to left center for a clean hit. Jimmy easily beat the throw home, for the first run of the game. It did not matter that Les, overambitious, was out trying to make a two-bagger out of his single.

"All right, varsity, try and get that one back!" exulted Coach Phillips as the team changed sides. "Hi, Byers, the big stiff try to spike you?"

"Well, I had to go for the bag, sir," Jimmy replied. "He wanted to block——"

"I saw it," said Phillips. And added, to himself, "I swear, the kid must have the stuff."

Jimmy limped out to his position at the hot corner, to find out for certain just how hot the hot corner may become. His ankle hurt miserably. There was no time to bind it up. Darkness approached, and varsity fought for a tie, at least.

"Hold 'em, gang!" yelled Coach Phillips.

Farmer Wilson, overanxious to win his game, put on more speed than he could control, and hit the first

batter. Les roared to him to take his time. And then up came Hawkins, swinging two bats, and bringing with him the crucial point of the game and the turning, clinching point of Jimmy's freshman career in athletics. Jimmy studied Hawkins. He knew the varsity needed two runs to win. One on, nobody out. Naturally Hawkins should hit. And yet, Hawkins acted as if he would bunt. Wilson wound up cautiously, and pitched. Hawkins bluffed a bunt. Ball one. Wilson pitched again, and Hawkins again bluffed at bunting, but pulled his bat back. Strike one.

"Maybe they'll play for one run," figured Jimmy. Hawkins stood as if he would bunt, and with the next pitch, Jimmy started down the line toward the plate. This was just what Hawkins wanted. He swung viciously at the ball and hit it hard.

"Made a sucker out of the kid," moaned Phillips. "No, no——"

Laughing, Hawkins dropped his bat and turned for first. He'd show the little devil! Jimmy, in full stride as if to snatch up a bunted ball, shuddered as he saw Hawkins brace and swing, and heard the crack of the bat against the leather. Off balance, he tried to stop, but could not do so in time to set for the ball. Luckily, even in the growing darkness, he saw it coming, a twisting, whirling hop off a hard baked diamond. Instinctively he put up his hands to protect himself and fend off the ball. It broke back his arms and drove his gloved hand hard against his nose and eyes, stunning him momentarily.

Sick at being fooled on the play, he clutched at the ball for a throw to first, but realized it was too late. The flying Hawkins seemed safe already. And as he clutched for the leather it seemed to elude him. He could not hold it. Yes,—no, yes! He had it. Suppose that man on first tries for third! Without waiting to

see whether the runner would charge for the hot corner, Jimmy whirled and dived for the bag.

"Nice stop—the old head, by George,——" But things moved faster than Coach Phillips could express his thoughts, as he squirmed on the bench in excitement.

Jimmy scrambled to the bag in time to head off and touch the runner, who came in so fast he could not stop. Then, whirling past the base-line toward left field, Jim turned about sidewise and threw to second base on the chance Hawkins might try to take advantage of the scramble at the hot corner.

"Had his nerve,—gotta fast bean,—look, look," muttered Phillips. "*Got him! Yah, rhinies!*"

But the coach's outburst was not a second ahead of the uproar from the rhinies over Jimmy's nervy stop, recovery and quickly thought-out double play. The third varsity hitter grounded out, and the rhinies had won!

"That don't sell any papers," chuckled Phillips to himself. "They'll lick us next time. But they can't lick my quarter-back. I've *got* a quarter-back. Old Hot Corner Jimmy! Now I'll have to get hold of Hawkins and make him lay off Byers. The kid is too good for him, and will make him quit. Gotta have him, in there behind Hot Corner Jimmy, next fall."

Les and Billy, trying to explain the play to each other, gave it up and took out their enthusiasm beating Jimmy on the back, all the way to the gym. But Jimmy wished his torn ankle would quit hurting.

"Where's Hot Corner Jimmy?" yelled Coach Phillips a little later, entering the freshman locker-room with a kit in his hand. The great coach himself dressed and bandaged Jimmy's lacerated ankle, as tenderly as if the boy were already his dependable, prized quarter-back.

And "Hot Corner Jimmy" was the ballyhoo with which Les and Billy introduced him at dinner to the Alpha Omegas. Later they told the whole story of Jim's day with Dory, while Jimmy blushed and fidgeted.

"I'll get that big tramp," declared big Hilly Hilligoss.

"I'll get him first," asserted Jake, his younger and huskier brother.

"You'll have to beat us to him," said Les and Billy, at once.

"Aw, you fellows keep out. This is my private fight," grinned Jimmy. "And besides, it's all over now."

"But the shouting," said Les. "Hawkins will yell his head off for a long time."

CHAPTER XV

FOR LOVE OR MONEY

"JIM, you look lower'n a stone bruise," exclaimed big Hilly Hilligoss. "What's the trouble?"

Hilligoss, happy because graduation was only ten days away, had entered his room at the fraternity house and found young Byers steeped in gloom. A letter, fallen from Jimmy's hand, lay across his knees.

"Oh, I've just been treating myself to a dose of the blues," Byers grinned dubiously. "Trying to figure out where I go from here, and don't see the way out. Of course, I could live outside the house, and maybe get by——"

"What's the big idea? Spit it out," Hilligoss commanded, as a senior may.

"Well, you know I'm here on a railroad scholarship," Byers explained. "It didn't cover the extra expense of living in a fraternity house. But President Allison, of the M. G. and V., to pay me for some work I did for his road last fall, has been taking care of my house bills. That lets me get by."

"Sure, nothing wrong with that."

"No, but it's all over but the crying out loud," said Jimmy. "Just got a letter from Mr. Allison. He says he can not take care of the expense next year, though he feels he owes it to me (and that's the bunk), because he's leaving the M. G. and V., and is going to be president of a road with offices in New York."

"Gee, that's tough," commented Hilligoss. "But say, it might be worse. You've still got your scholarship, and——"

"Yeah, but I had it all figured out I could stay here this summer and get some studying done," Jimmy continued. "Next fall I'll want to play football, and all this year I've been out for some team or other, and I haven't had as much time to work——"

"For the love of learning,—and you studying *all* the time?"

"Well, I'm no greasy grind," Jimmy replied, "but I'd certainly like to study more than just enough to make my grades. There's a lot of stuff outside the classes I'd like to get. This summer I thought I'd stay here, and make up for the last winter and next. Now, in order to get by on my expenses next year, I'll have to get a job. And I haven't even begun to look for one yet."

"Stay here, anyhow," suggested Hilligoss. "They'll want you on the football team, and they'll find you some jobs."

"Yeah, but I'm gonna work at any job I take, and there's not enough time for work, and study *and* football," Jimmy declared. "Nope, I guess I'll just write to Mr. Allison and tell him I certainly appreciate what he has done——"

"Hit him for a job," Hilly exclaimed. "Great big railroad, lots of jobs."

"Don't need to do that, because he's already offered me one."

"Then you oughta be shot," said Hilly, "sittin' in here blue as a blister, all for no reason."

"Job as office boy," Jimmy continued. "Pays probably seven dollars a week. I can't live in New York on seven——"

"Oh, go out and run around the block," ordered Hilligoss. "You sit there and stew much longer, and you'll have that job down to two dollars and twelve cents a month. Go walk off your blues, kid. S'pose

you were in my fix,—just graduating, and the whole world ready to starve a young doctor to death.”

“C’mon, run around the block with me,” Jimmy invited. He jumped up and started for the hallway.

Hilly was replying that he would stay in the room and solve Jim’s problems for him, and Jimmy had reached the door, when a voice came up from downstairs.

“Byers! Hot Corner James Byers! Telephone!”

Jimmy went out, down the stairway to the landing, and into the phone booth. The call was from Coach Phillips, asking Jimmy to report at once to the gymnasium, bringing Les and Billy with him. On the run, Coach Phillips said.

Hurried search through the house failed to discover the two buddies, nor could Jimmy find any one who knew where they had gone. He felt certain neither of them had a class at this hour, it being shortly past one o’clock. They would not be at the Soda Keg, so soon after lunch,—but then, knowing no other place to seek, Jimmy hurried out of the house and in the direction of the popular student loafing-place.

“Just a little dessert,” explained Billy, waving a spoon at the heaping dish of ice-cream before him on a little table, when Jimmy discovered his two chums in the refreshment parlor.

“They don’t give us any ice-cream for lunch, and training season’s over, and we were hungry,” added big Les, with a grin. He, too, was devouring ice-cream covered with a sticky sweetish mess.

“C’mon, take it on the run,” said Jimmy. “Training season may not be over, after all. Coach just called up and said for us to report to the gym pronto.”

“If he thinks I’m gonna play ball all summer——” began Les.

"Believe me, *I'll* go," exclaimed Billy, jumping up. "Maybe he'll let me play. Haven't had a real chance to show him yet, and——"

"On our way," said Jimmy. "C'mon, Les. Up and at 'em. Let's go!"

"Oh, well," Les bluffed at complaining. His buddies knew he would rather play ball than eat. Before they were ten steps from the front door of the Soda Keg, he was leading the way.

"By George," said Billy, "I hope there *is* a game, and I break into it. I feel like pitching, now. Had something to eat, and——"

"But you left your ice-cream," protested Jimmy.

"Second dish," Billy explained. "You see, I'm six feet two, and I weigh a hundred and eighty. Big boy, big appetite, big meals, and I go great. But this athletic stuff. Cuppa tea, slice of toast, and *then* a game? Nix, for me. Too blame' weak."

"Plug up, Bill, you're leakin' bad," said Les. "Say, Jim, here's a good one. Dory Hawkins wants to see all three of us to-night, back at the Soda Keg."

"What for?" asked Jimmy, surprised.

"Sign a peace treaty with all of us," Billy suggested, grinning. "'Fraid if he doesn't, Les and I will lick him every time he cleans up on our little boy friend here."

"You haven't had to clean him *yet*," declared Jimmy. "C'mon, stop loafing. What's Hawkins want, Les?"

"Didn't say, but I told him, when he insisted, that we'd see him. Wants us to meet a friend of his, all he said. C'mon, Billy," said Les.

"Oh, gosh, this isn't any wind sprint," puffed Billy.

"There's your old ice-cream," grinned Jimmy. "Let's leave him, Les. Two steps at a time, hey?"

And they raced up the gymnasium steps, Billy panting in the rear. "Take the next car, Billy!"

Arrived in the freshman dressing-room, Jimmy forgot all about his troubles over jobs and studies, and the appointment to meet Hawkins fled from his mind. He and his buddies found the freshman baseball team, laughing, shouting and getting into baseball togs.

"Here, Byers, Moore, Armstrong," called Coach Phillips. "Into your things in a hurry. We've got to fill in for a game with the varsity. Japanese University team missed a train at St. Louis. Alumni back for the beginning of commencement exercises can't be disappointed. We pinch hit for the Japs. Get your duds. Need a little workout."

"Oh, boy, let us at 'em," yelled big Les Moore.

"Let *me* at 'em," muttered Billy Armstrong. "Haven't started a game against varsity yet."

"Armstrong," called the coach, as if reading the tall boy's thoughts, "you'll start the game in the box. Save yourself. Don't start warming up till I tell you."

"Better take a nap," whispered Jimmy mischievously. "All that ice-cream——"

"Full as a tick," admitted Billy. "But I'll be strong as a horse."

A little while later they were out on freshman field. Coach Phillips gave them all a chance to hit a few balls, and then sent them to the diamond for fielding practise. Jimmy, at third base, had his head full of baseball but he noticed, by chance, a stranger sitting on a bench not far from the third base-line. He could not tell that the stranger was watching him carefully. When a coach, hitting ground balls in an effort to give you one too hot to handle, or one just out of your reach, makes a strenuous game of it, you do not have much time to watch people on the side-lines.

When the squad adjourned to Jordan Field and

found a goodly crowd of alumni, townspeople and students awaiting the Japanese nine, Jimmy noticed that the stranger came with them. The varsity team was already on the field, and Hawkins, second-base-man, slouched across the diamond to meet the stranger. He found a place for the man on the side-lines, and talked with him a few minutes, both of them eying the freshman squad. Although Jimmy did not know it, Dory was identifying him, Billy and Les, for the newcomer. Jimmy wondered who the man could be.

Presently a boy with a megaphone addressed the stands to explain to the crowd that the strong freshman nine, winner over the varsity in one of four games, would play in the place of the Japanese. At the end of the game, anybody not satisfied could get his money back. Batteries for the game, Armstrong and Moore, for the freshmen; Martin and Haworth for the varsity.

"Billy," said Jim Byers, as the freshmen huddled around their bench just before the game was called, "got an idea."

"Shoot," Billy replied.

"Work y'r old curve ball for all it's worth," suggested Jim.

"Gotta lotta speed to-day, feelin' strong," began Billy. "Plenty to eat."

"Yeah, but Farmer Wilson pitched the last two games against 'em, and they got on to his steam," urged Jimmy.

"And your ball's not so fast or heavy as Farmer's," chimed in Les. "The kid's right, Billy. Let's work on 'em. They'll be lookin' for speed, so let's first ball 'em fast, and then work with the curve."

"That's the program," declared Coach Phillips, overhearing the remark. "That's the old head-work. Let's make 'em wish the Japs had got here."

And the game was on. For eight innings it was a hard-fought, first-class ball game. And then for one more inning, it was more than that. After some free hitting and defensive play equal to most league ball, the rhinies and varsity went into the ninth with the score four to three in varsity's favor. The three musketeers, Jimmy, Les and Billy, were in the game up to their necks and if the rest of the rhinies had done as well they would have been out in front.

Billy Armstrong was first at bat. Tired from his strenuous efforts in the box, he took three wild swings and the third, by some chance, connected for a looping single back to second base. Jimmy, batting as lead-off, went up. He had smashed out one solid two-bagger and sent a long fly to left, and hoped Coach Phillips would let him hit, but the coach ordered a sacrifice.

"Good idea at that," muttered Jimmy to himself. He shouldered up to the plate as if he intended to knock the cover off the ball. But on the first pitch he dumped a neat grounder down the third base-line, and fled for first. The third-baseman, taken unaware, got the ball to first too late to nip him, and Jimmy seeing the first sacker step away from the bag, hunched that he intended to shoot back to third to head off Billy. Instead of slowing down, therefore, Jimmy put on steam and whirled for second base.

Going down, he saw Billy sliding for third, with the pitcher and the third-baseman scrambling to the bag to take the throw. In the mix-up, Billy was safe and the third-baseman, seeing Jimmy sprinting for second, whipped the ball down to Dory Hawkins in an effort to get him. Jim beat the throw with a sharp dashing slide into the bag.

"Nice goin', kid," grumbled Hawkins grudgingly. "Heads-up baseball, I call it."

"'Bliged," said Jimmy, as the crowd set up a roar of encouragement for the rhinies.

"See yuh at the Soda Keg 's evening?" asked Hawkins. "Got sumpin to interest you, maybe."

"Be there," replied Jimmy, wondering what it was all about.

With the tying and winning runs on third and second, things looked good for the freshmen. Coach Phillips ordered his next man to hit, and he produced a long fly to center field, after which Billy scored. Jimmy was held at second when the varsity pitcher knocked down the throw-in and tossed to third. The next man struck out, and Jimmy waited on big Les Moore. The husky catcher delivered a short single over second on which, by fast running, Jimmy scored. Snappy support helped Billy blank the varsity in the last half, and the rhinies had won!

"Got three ball-players, anyhow," commented Coach Phillips. "Wide-awake ball, Byers. You, too, Armstrong."

On the way home from the game, the three boys talked over their date with Hawkins. Les and Billy were curious about the stranger, described by Jimmy, but Jim's thoughts were chiefly of the changed attitude of Hawkins. After two fights with the big fellow, rival for quarter-back in football, he could not understand why Dory was so anxious to be friendly.

After dinner there was a fraternity meeting, called by Hilligoss, head of the house, and freshmen were barred. This left the three musketeers free to meet Hawkins, and they made their way to the Soda Keg. They found Hawkins, with the stranger, awaiting them.

"Hi, felluhs," said Hawkins, "c'mon back in one of these booths," and he led the way to a booth with a table in it. "Meet Mr. Watkins. Mr. Watkins, this

is Byers, and this is Moore, and this is Armstrong. Mr. Watkins is a baseball man, felluhs."

"Glad to meet you, boys," said Watkins, shaking hands. "Wanted to talk to yuh, specially after seein' yuh work this afternoon. Nice game yuh put up. I'm lookin' for ball-players, and asked Hawkins to round up some of his friends."

"Did he tell you we're friends of his?" demanded big Les aggressively, with a meaning look at Hawkins.

"Aw, we have a little row, now and then," grinned Hawkins uneasily.

"Bound to, in any hard game," said Watkins, and laughed in a friendly way. Jim Byers did not like the man. He seemed too oily. But he listened as Watkins continued talking. "I've got a club in the Industrial League, Chicago territory. We play a good brand of ball, as Dory knows. He played second for me last year. But the league was a little too fast for us last summer, and I gotta brace. Need a third-baseman and a catcher, and I can use another pitcher, too."

"Got any jobs in connection with your league?" asked Jimmy, thinking perhaps some big factory might give the players half-time work.

"These *are* jobs," grinned Hawkins slyly.

"How do you mean?" asked Jim.

"He means, this is a regular baseball league, playing to good crowds," explained Hawkins.

"To get good talent, we pay good salaries. I can offer each one of you boys fifty dollars a week, and expenses when we're on the road. See? Not so bad, hey? For young felluhs with their way to make?"

"Save enough to go through school," vouchsafed Dory Hawkins.

"Oh, boy," exclaimed the impulsive Les Moore, thinking he saw a way to save the family purse that was back of him.

"Learn some baseball, too," put in Billy. "Experience——"

"You guys can make the grade," said Watkins. "Play the same brand of ball yuh did to-day, and with Hawkins at second, and our other boys that can hit, we'll show the old league some steppin'. What say, boys? Heads-up guys like you felluhs might as well realize on what yuh got."

"But here," Jimmy objected, "this would be professional baseball."

"Sure, that's what I'm talkin' about," Watkins replied. "A lotta college boys pick up enough dough in the summer to——"

"But they'd be ineligible for college games," protested Jimmy.

"Don't be so dumb," grinned Dory.

"Hawkins is playin' here, ain't he?" asked Watkins smoothly. "Why? It's easy. I don't hire Hawkins. I sign up Jim Wilkinson to play second base for me. I don't know Hawkins at all, in the summer-time. But with this other name,—and besides, nobody in the crowds around Chicago is gonna be watchin' for you guys, or take the trouble to protest yuh for college stuff, see?"

"It's easy," said Hawkins. "Like takin' candy from a baby."

"S'pose the baby yells," grinned Les.

"All the star college players——" began Watkins, seeking to clinch his argument. He thought he saw the boys leaning away from his proposition, and he was right.

"Well, I'm not interested, for one," said Jimmy Byers decisively. "I'm hard up, and all that, but I'd rather not sign. Hawkins can if he likes. Or maybe Moore or Armstrong. They need the money, too," and he winked at Billy, whose father owned more

property than he could keep track of personally. "But I'm out."

"'Fraid yuh can't make the grade?" sneered Hawkins.

"No, I don't know whether I could or not," replied Jim calmly.

"Turn down fifty a week, all summer?" asked Watkins in surprise. "I could give yuh a little bonus for signin', see? Told Hawkins I'd slip him one if he got me some more boys——"

"So *that's* why he's so friendly, hey?" thought Jimmy to himself. He said, "It's a question of holding up eligibility. I came here to get an education, and the place has been good to me. Right now, I'd rather play ball for Jordan, than make the fifty a week, much as I need the money. Nope, not interested."

He stood up to go, feeling a deep disgust for Dory Hawkins. His knuckles, the ones with which he had swung on Dory's chin a few weeks before, itched as he recalled the feeling of the blow he had struck when Dory had first roughed him and then called him yellow.

"Me neither," said Les Moore, also rising from the bench and sliding out from behind the little table.

"'Bliged for the offer, anyhow," chimed in Billy Armstrong.

The three of them started away from the booth, when Hawkins called to them.

"Saay, you guys won't say anything——" he began, flushing guiltily.

"Nope," responded Moore and Billy Armstrong at once, unwilling to admit they might be thought of as talebearers or spies. But Jimmy said nothing. He led the way out.

En route home again, Jimmy was plunged in gloom. Once more he was thinking of the loss of his friend,

Mr. Allison, and the need for work during the summer. Fifty a week for twelve weeks, with savings out of it to add to his railroad scholarship——

"Why so blue, kid?" asked Les.

"You look like a sick beggar," said Billy, "instead of a man that could afford to turn down six hundred dollars for three months play."

And Jimmy told his troubles. Les scoffed at them. Jim, he said, had the world by the tail. He should worry if he didn't get *all* the time for study. He'd find some way out. And that railroad scholarship, anyhow, certainly didn't demand straight A work and lots of outside reading and study to boot.

"Lay off the kid, Les," demanded Billy Armstrong. "I been thinkin', and he's got to use his head. Where'd you and I be if we didn't have anybody back of us, hey? We'd be bustin' ourselves every minute, and, at that, probably starving to death, instead of gettin' an education on our own. But say, Jim, why didn't you grab the fifty a week? Gee whiz——"

"Oh, can that stuff," ordered Jim Byers sturdily. "I'm no saint, but I don't intend to make money playing ball, and then live a lie, and tell lies about it, for three more years to play baseball and football here at Jordan. It's one thing to play for the love of it, and something else again, for money."

They approached the fraternity house just then, and the discussion ended. Jimmy felt he had done the right thing, and his mind was easy on that score. But he did wish he had a better line on his course for the next few months. A living to make, and the opportunity for extra study lost.

"Hi, kids, where yuh been?" demanded big Hilly Hilligoss, at the door. "Meeting's over, and we been looking for you."

"Just been turning down a handsome offer to play

professional baseball all summer," exclaimed Billy, with a mock air of righteous importance.

"Yeah, that's good," jeered Hill. "But say, Jim, I got you all fixed up!"

"What for?" queried Jim dully.

"I mean, the bunch has," Hilligoss explained. "Listen,—s'pose we give you a job waitin' table here at the house for next year. Pays your board. Will *that* let you by all right?"

"Gee whiz," began Jimmy, "I wasn't asking for any help——"

"But you got it, just the same," exclaimed Hilligoss. "What do you say?"

"Aw, he don't want to be any waiter," put in Billy. The idea of carrying dishes appalled him, with his background of luxurious home surroundings.

"No, of course not," Les added.

"Why not?" demanded Jimmy militantly. "Certainly I do, Hilly, and, by George, I appreciate what the gang wants to do for me. I'll take the old job. I can sling hash——"

"Farther'n I can throw a baseball," yelled Les noisily. "Atta old kid, Jim."

"Not ashamed to work," declared Jimmy, flushing. "Might as well get used to it, because it looks like I've got a long sentence of it ahead of me. And that reminds me, I got to write a letter."

"Accepting a swell position somewhere?" jeered Billy.

"Sure! Accepting a position as office boy in a railroad office, at nine dollars a week, maybe."

"I wouldn't work for that little money," said Billy. "My dad would give you a job at three times——"

"Yeah?" drawled Jim. "But you see, Bill, I'll work at this a while for the love of it, like baseball. And after while I'll work at it for *real* money."

CHAPTER XVI

STEP NUMBER TEN

THE word "squawk" is not a pretty word, but, as has often been pointed out, there are no pretty words for ugly deeds. "Blab" is not a pretty word, and neither is "snitch" or "squeal." The word "tattle-tale" has a round, rolling sound, but, like the others, tells so vividly the meaning of the action that it loses its attractiveness on the mere utterance.

None of these words is popular, partly because they are ugly words, and partly because the deeds they name are uglier still. Nobody likes a squawker. It is not sporting to snitch. Blab, and see how quickly you lose favor not merely with the one on whom you squeal, but the one to whom you tattle.

The day before commencement, Jimmy sat in his room at the fraternity house and thought long and miserable thoughts on the subject of talebearing. He thought of it as squawking, because that is the word used nowadays. Weary from a long day spent in helping to entertain visitors from the homes of graduating seniors, Jimmy lay sprawled on his bed. The sad yet warming spirit of commencement week had gripped him, although he was ending merely his first year in the great university. He hated to say good-by to Hilly Hilligoss, first his enemy and then his good friend. He remembered the pleasures he had found at Jordan, and recounted the tough problems he had encountered. And then he fell to thinking of Dory Hawkins.

"He needn't have tried to drag me into professional baseball," Jimmy mused. "Nice mess I'd have been in, with Billy and Les. By George,——"

"Kid, you look so blue a fellow would think it's you graduating to-morrow, instead of me," interrupted Hilligoss, coming into the room quietly. Jimmy rolled over and sat on the edge of the bed. "I'm the guy that's leaving, while you've got three more years to stay. Let me do the sob stuff."

"You don't seem any too happy yourself," grinned Jimmy.

"Nope, and why should I?" demanded Hilligoss, sitting down near the window. "Been here almost six years. Hadda battle at first, but most of the time, the place has been good to me. Jordan is a great old place, and I hate to leave."

"It's been good to me, too," said Jimmy, after a time.

"Then you ought not look so glum," Hilligoss replied.

"Well, I was not thinking about that," Jimmy explained. "I was trying to make up my mind to squawk on Dory Hawkins."

"I wouldn't do it," Hilly spoke up quickly. "Don't do it. Looks like a bum sport to squeal."

"I know it, and that's why I don't want to say anything," said Jim. "But then, I've got to do it."

"Why?" demanded Hilly. A senior with a freshman under his wing will, if he likes that freshman, keep him from making tactless moves.

"Well, Dory tried to get me and Les and Billy to join him on a professional ball team this summer," said Jim.

"You didn't join him, did you?" queried Hilly. "Well, then, what of it?"

"He's played pro ball himself," Jimmy replied.

"Is that any of *your* business?" Hilly demanded. "You keep out of it. A guy's tongue can get him in enough trouble talkin' about his own affairs, without lettin' it wag at somebody else."

He was interrupted in his rough and ready discourse by the noisy entrance of Les and Armstrong, seeking Jimmy.

"Nice little family gathering here," boomed big Les.

"Giving the boy a last bit of advice?" asked Billy.

"You're the guys that put the fresh in freshman," grinned Hilligoss. "But you're right, I'm giving him the best advice he ever had. He wants to go and squeal on Hawkins for playing professional ball, and I'm talking him out of it."

"Aw, Jim, you don't wanta butt into that bird's affairs," protested Les.

"Wouldn't touch him with a ten-foot pole," added Billy.

"Can't help it," began Jimmy.

"Why, it would look like you're trying to have him barred so you can win the job at quarter without any trouble," interrupted Les Moore.

"You can beat him out," Billy chimed in, "without worrying about his pro baseball. Lay off him, Jim."

Jimmy, suddenly resolute, stiffened as Les and Billy spoke. He stood up, clenched his fists and crossed the room.

"If that's the way it looks to my best friends, I've got to do it," he said shortly, as he crossed the room. "I'm going over to the gym right now and find Coach Phillips."

He strode out the door and slammed it behind him. The others stared after him in surprise, and then looked at one another dumbly.

"Pig-headed little——" began Hilligoss.

"Let's go with him," exclaimed Billy, and, closely followed by Les, ran to the door and snatched it open. "Wait a minute, Jim."

"We'll go with you," added Les. "Might have trouble."

"Go by myself," retorted Jimmy, from the head of the stairs. "You hot-headed birds would *make* trouble," and he ran down the steps. Les and Billy went back to denounce their chum to big Hilligoss. None of them could understand why the boy would stoop to the level of an informer.

Jimmy, without hat or coat, left the house by a side door and cut across the lawn to avoid mingling with the commencement visitors thronging to the house for dinner. Across the street and through the campus he hurried at his customary dog-trot. Head down, engrossed in thought, he was nearing the gymnasium when he almost bumped into another boy.

"Heads up," exclaimed the other, laughing. "Oh, it's Jimmy. Hi, kid. What's the rush, and where to?"

"Up to the gym, to see Coach a minute," Jimmy explained.

The other boy was husky Jake Hilligoss.

"Go with yuh, and then go home with yuh," volunteered Jake, and he fell into step with Jimmy, without giving him a chance to refuse company. Jimmy wanted to ask him not to come, but Jake, a great burly fellow, had taken a sort of protective interest in the smaller chap, and could not be denied.

Jim hated to be caught by one of his friends in the act of carrying tales, but finally reflected, as they hurried up the gymnasium steps, that it might be just as well to have company. He sought out the office of Coach Phillips, with Jake at his heels. The coach was at his desk, signing some letters.

"Hello, boys," he said. "How are things?"

"Not so good," Jimmy replied uneasily. "I wanted to see you a minute, to talk to you. Would you mind sending for Hawkins, sir?"

"What's up, Byers?" asked Coach Phillips.

"Well, I've got something to tell you, sir, but I'd rather say it with Hawkins here," Jimmy explained.

"Important, as well as mysterious?" asked Phillips, smiling. But as he did so, he reached for the telephone. Calling for the fraternity house where Hawkins lived, he soon had Dory on the wire, and asked him to come at once to the gym. "Now then, boys, you'll excuse me till I've read and signed these letters. Hawkins will be coming over here in a little while," he said.

He went ahead with his mail, and Jimmy and Jake sat down on chairs near a window, overlooking a broad stretch of the rolling campus. Jake wondered what it was all about. Jimmy, nervous but intent on going through with his program, squirmed restlessly on his chair.

"What the samhill?" whispered Jake, when he could stand the suspense no longer.

Jimmy shook his head. Coach Phillips continued signing his letters. It was ten minutes before they heard the approaching steps of big Dory Hawkins, echoing down the empty hall, and Jimmy was in a cold sweat. Hawkins entered the office, as the coach finished the last of his letters.

"Well, Hawkins, here you are," said Phillips. "Byers just came in, and said he had something to tell me, and wanted to have you here."

"Oh, Byers, yeah," sneered Hawkins, with a side glance at Jimmy. "Where's y'r regular body-guard, kid?"

"Left them at home for your sake," replied Jimmy, grinning.

"Now then, boys, leave out the rough stuff," admonished Coach Phillips. "It's late. Let's get at this thing. What is it, Byers?"

"Well, sir, it's hard to go into it," said Jim soberly. "But I decided I had to. A week ago, after that game with the varsity when we subbed for the Japanese, Hawkins introduced me and Armstrong and Moore to a man named Watkins. This man Watkins," and Jimmy looked at Hawkins to find Dory scowling maliciously at him, "offered us jobs at fifty dollars a week playing ball this summer."

"What?" exclaimed Phillips, rising from his chair.

"Aw, for the love of Mike," began Hawkins, with an attempt at laughter. "After the way me 'n' Byers been fightin' around here, would I go and try to help him——"

"Never mind, Hawkins. What else, Byers?" commanded the coach.

"He said he had a team in an industrial league around Chicago, and hired college boys. They used fake names, he said," Jimmy continued. "And he said Hawkins had played ball for him under the name of Jim Wilkinson——"

"Why, you dirty little squealer," exclaimed Hawkins, advancing a step toward Jimmy. "I don't like you a little bit, and——"

"That makes it fifty-fifty," retorted Jimmy calmly. "Only I don't work at my half of it until you start something."

"And try starting something," threatened big Jake Hilligoss.

"Calm down, boys, calm down," warned the coach. "Let's get at this thing. Sit down here, Hawkins. Now then, Byers, what else?"

"That's all, sir, except that I thought you ought to know about it," said Jimmy, blushing. "I hated to be

in the position of a squawker, but I thought you ought to know."

"Squawker is right," said Hawkins hotly. "Run and squeal, if you can't beat me any other way, run in here and try to get me knocked out for ineligibility. Coach," and Hawkins turned to Mr. Phillips, "this baby and his two buddies have been on my neck ever since spring football started. You saw 'em, and——"

"That sort of stuff doesn't go with me, Dory," interrupted the coach quietly. "I did see them. I also saw how things started. But that hasn't anything to do with this case. You've been wrong before, Dory, but you've got a chance to show you're right in this matter. You heard what Byers said. What about it?"

"It's a lie, Coach," declared Hawkins. But he did not look Mr. Phillips in the eye, and he flushed as he spoke. His manner was not convincing.

"Coach——" began Jimmy.

"Wait, Byers."

"It is not true," said Hawkins, stubbornly clinging to his lie. "I don't know any Watkins, and I never played pro ball under the name of Wilkinson, or anywhere else under any other name."

"Coach," interrupted Jimmy, "I'll get Moore and Armstrong. They'll back me up. They had the same offer. They heard what Watkins said."

"Yes, and they'll go just as far as you will to try to get me, too," said Hawkins. "They'd be over here squawking themselves, if they thought of it."

"They know I'm here," declared Jimmy, "and tried to talk me out of coming if that's of any interest to you. Lay off them. I'm the one that's squawking."

"All right, all right, drop the argument," cut in Coach Phillips. "Now then, Byers has told his story, and Hawkins has denied it. Neither of you can prove your story, except by somebody just as much inter-

ested. I'll find out for myself what the facts are, because I know Watkins myself. I'll be awfully sorry, Hawkins, if I find out that what Byers says is true. I shall hate to lose you, if you are barred, because you can be a good quarter-back, if you like. And, Byers, if what you've said is not true, I shall feel badly about it. I would not like to think that you are a squealer."

"Aw, Coach, listen," spoke up Jake, as Jimmy flushed deeply. "This fellow's not that kind of a guy. You can believe him, Coach."

"It is not my job, right now, to believe anything," said Coach Phillips. "Rather, it is my job to find out the facts and then act. That's what I'll do. You both understand this is a serious matter. For my part, I should not like to be in the shoes of either one of you, but I will certainly see that the right thing is done. Now, then, Byers, just another word. No, sit down, Hawkins, I'm not through with you, yet.

"Byers, I've always thought you were a square, hard-fighting boy. How does it come I find you squealing? Is it necessary to get even with Hawkins? Aren't you one or two up on him anyhow?"

"Mr. Phillips," said Jimmy, choking down a lump in his throat, "I didn't want to squawk. I——"

"Aw, that's good," Hawkins muttered.

"Shut up, Dory. Go ahead, Byers."

"Well, it's hard to tell, sir," Jimmy began again. "But commencement came along. I'm only a freshman, but I saw big Hilly leaving, and a lot of other fellows, and they all talk about what Jordan has done for them, and it got me to thinking that the place has been good to me, too. I wouldn't have come in here, except for that. Hilly tried to stop me, and so did Les and Billy Armstrong.

"But it's this way, Coach, I got to thinking Jordan has been good to me, and I haven't done anything for

Jordan. Next year I'm going to, if I can. Then I got to thinking about football, and about Hawkins and this professional baseball stuff. I want to play quarter next fall. So does Hawkins."

"So you come runnin' in here with this stuff, and figure I'll get knocked out, hey?" sneered Dory. "Givin' you the job."

"But one quarter-back is not enough. I might get hurt, or Hawkins might get hurt," continued Jimmy. "Well, if Jordan has been good to me, it is up to me to be good to Jordan, even if I have to look like a squealer to do it. So I thought I could stand that, if you could take this evidence, and get Dory whitewashed. If you can, we'll have him here. If you can't, and I'd never told, somebody else might find out about it, and make a protest against him, and——"

"All right, Byers, all right," and Coach Phillips stopped him. He walked around his desk, and patted the boy on the shoulder. "You've done exactly the right thing, and I'm proud of you! I don't think I said anything hard to you about being a squawker, but I admit I thought badly of you, for a minute. And I want to apologize for even thinking it. Now then," and he turned about to Hawkins, "Dory, stand up."

"Yes, sir," said Hawkins, in a daze.

"Hawkins, this boy has done a fine thing for you, and for Jordan," said the coach. "He's let me and you and his buddies think he's a squealer, in order to do it. Now then, let's come clean, and get to work on this proposition. The Collegiate Association will whitewash, or declare eligible, boys who have played professional baseball, *provided* they can tell a straightforward story of necessity, and are honest about it. I want you to tell me——"

"Aw, Coach," Dory fairly whined, "I had to. Didn't have any money or anybody back of me, and I

figured to make money to get back to school. It's tough when——"

"I know all about that," said the coach. "But how about *this* summer? To have you declared eligible, so that you can be out there fighting with Byers for that job at quarter-back next fall, we must have your promise that you will not play professionally again. How about that?"

"I gotta have some kind of a job."

"Surely, and I'll help you find one," Coach Phillips promised. "That's good. Now then, Hawkins, you come over here in the morning, and we'll start to work on this thing, and save you for Jordan's best football team, next fall. Byers, I'm much obliged to you. Come here," and Coach Phillips grasped one boy with each hand, while big Jake stood in the background.

"Hawkins, Byers has been a friend of yours, against your wishes, and I want you to shake hands with him," said the coach. "Byers. Hawkins is *going* to be a friend of yours. Shake on this thing."

The two boys, Byers standing inches shorter, faced each other and gripped palms. Jimmy looked straight at the bigger fellow's eyes, but Dory's gaze fell.

"That's right," Hawkins managed to say. "I'll be here next fall to give you a battle."

"Suits me," grinned Jimmy.

"All right, boys, we start a new deal. Run along now, it's dinner-time. See you next fall, Byers,—have you work to do?" asked the coach.

"Office boy in a railroad office in New York," Jimmy replied, grinning.

"Armstrong lives there, doesn't he?" the coach queried. "Let me give you a football to take with you. Get out with him and throw him passes when you can. Good-by, boys, take care of yourselves. Put some muscle on where the fat is now, Jake."

Hawkins had shuffled out by the time Jimmy had thanked Phillips for the football. Jim and Jake started to go, but the coach had one more word.

"And, Jake, tell those other freshmen and your big brother about this, but tell nobody else."

"Tell 'em?" echoed big Jake, grabbing Jimmy by the arm. "I'll crown 'em for thinking he would squawk just to be squawking."

CHAPTER XVII

RAILROADING

"THIS thing of learning to be a railroad man is not what it is cracked up to be. Instead of working where I can hear the engines heave and pant, and see the smoke, and count the loaded freight-cars and empties, I'm stuck away in a sky-scraper about as far from a railroad as you can get and still be on Manhattan Island. My job is assistant to President Allison, who is running the Old Stony system, and all I do is go around with him, carry his portfolio, put in telephone calls for him, and so on. Of course, he talks to me about railroad problems, but it is just as if he were talking to himself. I think he only wants to hear how his ideas sound when they're spoken. Anyway, he never asks me anything, and of course I never volunteer. Boys should be seen, and so forth.

"However, he pays me twenty-five per week, and is awful nice to me, and the money lets me live, even at New York prices. *If* you can call what I am doing living. Ride the L to town, with a walk at each end of the line for exercise, to keep out of the subway's bad air. Have half an hour for lunch. Evenings, I read, or take a walk. Saturday noons, I go out to Billy's house in Westchester, and we fool around with the football Coach gave me. I shoot passes to Billy, on the run, until he's winded. Then I practise drop-kicking. Billy is the same as ever. Eats his head off, of all kinds of trash. Rich people must have cast-iron stomachs, the way they eat and drink. I told Bill I'd kill him if he didn't go in training by August the fifteenth. He makes the same old stall,—has to take on weight to play end at Jordan.

"Wish you'd write me a letter when you get time, New York is a lonesome place for a guy without a lot of money to spend. Wish I could go back, right now, to Jordan, with you and Bill, but then maybe September will hurry. So long."

Thus Jimmy wrote in a letter to Les during his summer's work on a job that seemed to him a cross between office boy and confidential secretary to a railroad president. Keeping his ears open and his mouth shut, except when asking questions, Jimmy really learned a great deal about railroad operation. His fingers itched to get hold of a shovel and ladle coal from a swaying bin into a jolting, rocking furnace, or to check freight shipments, or handle an order book in the traffic department. But he always managed to remember that Mr. Allison, his friend from the early days at Jordan, probably knew what he was doing when he assigned the office job. If muscle-straining, back-bending labor were necessary to a mastery of railroad work, President Allison would see that he got it.

Therefore Jimmy took out his desire for active effort in long walks, and in Saturday and Sunday football workouts with Billy, on the great Westchester estate of the Armstrong family. Letters, with some reading, occupied his spare time, and gave him relief from his loneliness.

"I'm just like a fish out of water when I'm at Billy's house," Jim wrote to Les. "Have a good time Saturday afternoon and part of Sunday, with the football. But the rest of the time, we don't talk the same language. Billy trains with a swell lot of cake-eaters. Most of 'em fat, girls or boys. Wear clothes that would put me through college. Drive cars that would support me the rest of my life. Stay up all hours. Wild parties. What a life!"

To which Les, a husky Ohio boy from a family of manufacturing engineers in moderate circumstances, replied that Jimmy ought to be glad of the chance to see how the other one-hundredth lives. But this is getting a long way from Jimmy's job of railroading.

"Jimmy," said President Allison one July morning,

as he leaned back in his chair between table and desk, "what was the first thing you learned in geometry?"

"A straight line is the shortest distance between two points."

"Right the first time," smiled Mr. Allison. "Now, then, Jimmy, that is the first principle of railroading, too, but you'd be surprised how many high-up railroad men forget it. I've mentioned it to some of our people in connection with an idea I've got about transcontinental freight, but they won't see it. So what do you suppose I've got to do?"

"The same thing we did in mathematics," said Jimmy. "Every time we learned a new thing, we reviewed it, to be sure we'd learned it."

"Correct again, but the trouble is, reviewing is going to be a big job," said Mr. Allison thoughtfully. "I'll have to organize a committee of traffic, operating and financial men, surveyors and draftsmen, and have them go to work and set up the lesson. Then I'll have to persuade our executive committee to study the lesson. Tough luck, because it will take a month. No, by George, I'll make it in two weeks. Ask Smithers to get out a letter for my signature, calling the executive committee together two weeks from this morning, ten o'clock, important business. Then you hunt up Adkins, Wilkie, Morganross, Jones and Hunter and have them all here at three o'clock. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," Jimmy said.

"On your way, then," snapped President Allison. "And you come in at three o'clock yourself, remembering that nothing you hear is to be mentioned outside."

"Yes, sir," replied Jimmy, and hurried out, glad of something important to do, even if his connection with the task was a mere running of errands. He knew that, despite his chief's jocular manner, the idea in his mind was of vital concern to the railroad.

"Men," began President Allison when the committee of five was grouped around his table that afternoon, with Jimmy sitting at his right hand, slightly back of him, "we need your help. Old Stony is working at capacity with present lines and equipment. Capacity is not enough to make a profit. We've got to increase capacity, even if we have to invest some new money to do it. Now then, we're not getting all the transcontinental, through freight we should get. We have no advantage in time or rates over any competitor.

"All right. Get these facts. We have a branch from the main to Grundy. Grundy's on the P. M. and B., trunk north and south. P. M. and B. has a switch or feeder, virtually abandoned, west out of Grundy to Adamson, eighteen miles. Adamson is nine miles from Keyport, on the Scogis line, with no road between Adamson and Keyport. Now then, Scogis handles little transcontinental. Suppose we could buy the branch from Grundy to Adamson, of the P. M. and B., and build between Adamson and Keyport. We'd have a twenty-seven-mile link between Scogis and our main line. What do you see?"

"Scogis out hustling with us for long distance shipments east and west," spoke up Adkins, traffic chief.

"Seventy-four miles less haulage than we now get," muttered Wilkie, superintendent of operation.

"But more business," interjected Adkins.

"And less operating expense," added Morganross.

"Great stuff, Chief," exclaimed Adkins. "Let's go to it!"

"We will," said President Allison. "We can double the freight we handle between Kansas City and New York, save twenty-four hours, and a great deal of operating expense. But that's merely my view. Each of you tackle this idea from your own angle. Have the route from Adamson to Keyport surveyed, and pre-

liminary estimates on cost of construction made. Keep every move secret. And give me, each of you, a memorandum on your opinion."

"Good enough, let's go," exclaimed the quick-acting Adkins.

"When do you want this stuff?" asked Wilkie bluffly.

"Two weeks from this morning, at nine o'clock," said Mr. Allison.

"Gee whiz, Chief, that's not much time," Wilkie protested.

"Plenty, plenty," Adkins rejoined. "Come on, let's move. I see a lot of business ahead, on that tie-up."

"Two weeks from this morning, nine o'clock," repeated Mr. Allison. "I've called a meeting of the executive committee for ten o'clock, to consider this thing."

The meeting adjourned, only Morganross remaining behind for a moment's conversation.

"Chief," Morganross asked, "you know, I suppose, of the P. M. and B. alliance with the White Way?" As Allison nodded Morganross continued: "Have you any reason to think we can get this branch line from the P. M. B. when, with our new tie-up complete, we will go into competition with the White Way?"

"That is the tough spot in this schedule," said Mr. Allison. "And it is the job over which I'm losing sleep. But I hope I can find some way of separating this little junk line from the P. M. and B."

Morganross volunteered to study the same problem, and then went out, leaving only Jimmy with the president of the road.

"And there you are, Jimmy," Mr. Allison smiled, with a wave of his hand. "They'll work two weeks, and dump in here on my table whole volumes of information. They'll prove my case for me with reams of stuff, and maps, and graphs, and financial set-ups, and what-

not; and then maybe I can show the executive committee. All the time I merely wish to prove geometry's first principle, which is——"

"The straight railroad hauls the most freight between two points," grinned Jimmy.

"Thatta boy," chuckled President Allison. "You're learning the railroad business rapidly, Jim."

The chief executive turned to his desk, as a sign of dismissal, and Jimmy hurried out of his office. Once at his own desk in an outer room, he dug up a detail map of the Old Stony system, and set to work to memorize the picture as outlined by his chief. Before doing anything else, he wished to frame clearly in his mind, the exact set-up toward which President Allison was working.

Riding out on the train at noon to the Armstrong Westchester place, Jimmy encountered Billy's father. The great metal magnate, hurrying into the car as the train pulled out of Grand Central Station, slumped into a seat beside Jimmy. Preparing to open a newspaper, he looked about him casually and saw his son's chum and week-end guest.

"Why, hello, Jim," he exclaimed. "How's the railroad business?"

"Punk," said Jimmy. "Anyhow, if it is any good, I'd never know it."

"Well, neither would I," rejoined Mr. Armstrong. "I'm a director in a railroad, and I can't find out anything about it."

"Is that so? What railroad?" asked Jimmy, surprised at this new revelation of the metal millionaire's interests.

"The P. M. and B.," Mr. Armstrong explained. "Our company has a big plant at a little town called Adamson, on a branch line of the P. M. and B. We can't afford to move the plant, but we couldn't get good

freight service there, so I bought P. M. and B. shares enough to get on the board, thinking I'd be able to get some service."

"Didn't you have any luck?" queried Jim, all ears now.

"Not a bit," said Mr. Armstrong. "The P. M. and B. has a traffic agreement with the White Way, an east and west system, and carries stuff roundabout so that the White Way will get all the east and west haul. That takes a lot of time, and time is money."

"Well, you'd think a man's own railroad would serve him, if no other did," Jimmy commented. "Does your freight business at Adamson amount to much?"

"Metals from the west and finished products east and west from Adamson," said Mr. Armstrong thoughtfully, "cost us about a quarter million a year in freight."

"Wheew," whistled Jimmy. "I didn't know all the freight business in the country amounted to that much."

"Freight is the best part of the railroad business," said Mr. Armstrong.

"I did know that much," Jimmy grinned. "But I haven't found out much more."

"Well, cheer up, keep your ears and eyes open, and you'll learn," Mr. Armstrong advised. "Week-ending with Billy, hey?" and without waiting for a reply, he turned to his newspaper, to study market reports.

Jimmy, smiling out the window, realized that he had accidentally learned a great deal of value to the Old Stony system by this chance conversation with the head of the Universal Metal Corporation. He pondered the best way in which, without embarrassing Mr. Armstrong, he might use this information for the benefit of Old Stony lines.

He worked out with Billy that afternoon. Monday

at the office he was anxious to talk with Mr. Allison, but the president was unusually, even feverishly, busy. Most of the time for the next two weeks, indeed, he was out of the office. He was trying to find a way of financing the purchase of the P. M. and B. branch and building the new line to connect with the Scogis system, without letting the P. M. and B. or White Way know what he was doing. Meantime, Adkins, Morganross and the rest were busily compiling their memoranda. Jimmy thought of telling Adams or Morganross what he had learned about Mr. Armstrong's freight situation, but decided it would not be best.

Early in the second week a Mr. Munson, an oily-looking individual who announced himself as an attorney, called to see Mr. Allison. The president was out, and Munson was referred to Jimmy. The boy instinctively mistrusted the man, but greeted him civilly enough. Munson endeavored to be friendly, and paused to pass the time of day. If the truth were known, he probably was glad Mr. Allison was out, because, after chatting for a moment, he tried to pump Jimmy.

"What's this I hear about Old Stony trying to buy into the P. M. and B.?" he asked.

"What——" began Jimmy, surprised. Then he recovered himself. "What do you hear?" he countered.

"Well, that, exactly," said Munson. "All over town, it is. Anything to it?"

"How should I know?" asked Jimmy. "The people who own this road do not tell me about their plans. Anyhow, the P. M. and B. is a north and south system, and we're east and west. What would we want with a north and south interest?"

"That's what I'd like to know," mused Munson. "The people who own your line have been telling somebody, for it's common gossip."

"Funny how things get rumored around," Jimmy commented. He feared to talk at all with this wily individual. Munson presently left, saying he would return. Jimmy reported on the visit and told Mr. Allison of his suspicion that Munson was a spy.

"You bet your boots he is," exclaimed Mr. Allison. "If he comes back, tell him nothing. Somebody in our organization has talked too much, but I haven't time to find out who it is. The damage seems to be done. I'm blocked everywhere I go."

"Then we can't put it over?" asked Jimmy, unconsciously using the "we" although he had not forgotten he was a mere combination assistant and office boy.

"I've *got* to find some way," muttered President Allison.

Jimmy thought to tell him then of Mr. Armstrong's interest, but remembered he could hardly explain how he had picked up the information from Mr. Armstrong without seeming to have blabbed on the Old Stony plans to the metal magnate. Therefore, he bided his time. Munson came back two or three times more. On one occasion, Jimmy saw him gossiping with a colored man, one Jones, who worked as general flunky around the offices. He thought little of it at the moment, but on Saturday morning, before the conference with the executive committee, he again saw Munson in the hall, once more talking to Jones. This made him suspicious.

Each of the five department heads had submitted his memorandum at nine o'clock and each, despite himself, was enthusiastic over the prospect for success once the new tie-up was made. Morganross advised Mr. Allison he saw no way in which the scheme could be worked. The president seemed gloomy, although

pleased to find the five reports in detail backing up his early judgment.

The executive committee met at ten o'clock, a group of alert business and financial men. Jimmy once more sat at President Allison's right hand, and watched the wheels within wheels move. Mr. Allison proposed his idea in brief, and met an absolute front. Jimmy could have cried with exasperation. But without waiting for a turn-down, or risking a vote, the president at once turned to his five reports and weighed them, one after another, before the committee. Jimmy, watching narrowly, saw first one and another of the committee come over to Allison's view-point. And at the end, he heard the whole proposition brought sharply to a head:

"Mr. Allison," said Adam Parsons, chairman of the board and of the executive committee, "it is not necessary to take a vote. The committee, I believe, is for you. If I am wrong, gentlemen, please interrupt me. We thought you were crazy, but we now believe you are right. But, I am sorry to say, we also think you are butting against a stone wall. Even if the P. M. and B. were willing to sell us that eighteen miles, the White Way would not stand for it. They've got a hold on the P. M. and B. Now then, you've proposed this thing. Put it over if you can."

"In other words, tag, I'm it?" smiled Mr. Allison wanly.

"You're it," rejoined Mr. Parsons, while other members of the committee smiled.

Jimmy, watching, could almost have cried again in exasperation at the cold-blooded manner in which they put the problem up to Mr. Allison, their employee. If he could swing it, they would profit. If he failed, they would not be caught in the failure.

"All right," said Mr. Allison grimly, "I'll catch somebody."

"But don't let the P. M. and B. crowd know what you're doing," warned Mr. Parsons, as the committee adjourned. "Call us back when you've anything to report."

"A week from this morning, same hour?" queried Allison aggressively.

"Will you have anything then?" asked Parsons, in surprise.

"Yes," Allison replied, adding, under his breath, "somehow."

When the committee had filed out, it was noon, and the office employees were scurrying about in a rush to leave for the August Saturday half-holiday. Jimmy sought word with Mr. Allison, resolved to tell him, now, of his information about the Universal Metal plant at Adamson. But, Mr. Allison, in a hurry to catch a train, asked him to wait until Monday. Reluctantly, Jimmy took his hat and started toward Grand Central for his weekly pilgrimage to Westchester. As he left, he noticed Jones hanging about, but thought nothing of it.

Down-stairs, as he left the building and started toward Forty-second Street in the noonday crowd, he encountered Mr. Munson, walking toward the railroad building. He passed the oily lawyer, and was half a block down the street before his resentment of Munson turned into active suspicion. Munson—Jones—Jones—Munson—he turned sharply about and fairly ran back to the building.

An elevator shot up to the office floors with him, and he burst out to run down the corridor to the entrance of the railroad suite. Munson, as he suspected, sat waiting in the outer office, and started in guilty surprise as Jimmy entered. But Jimmy did not pause. He flung through his own little ante-room, and into President Allison's private office.

As he recalled, Mr. Allison had gone away leaving the stack of reports on the Adamson-Grundy-Scogis hook-up on his desk. And hulking over the desk, his hands on the reports in the act of picking them up, stood the colored man, Jones. Outside, in the reception-room, Munson waited. Jimmy acted quickly.

"Give me those reports, Jones," he commanded.

"Ah's—Ah's, jus' gonna put 'em away, suh," stammered the negro.

"Give them to me," ordered Jimmy.

"What right y'all got, huh?" snorted the dinky, suddenly stubborn. "Ah'll take these things. Hunde'd dollahs,—uh, yuh got no business,——"

Jimmy sprang at the bigger fellow sharply, snatched the papers away from him, and retreated quickly around the table. "Jones," he said, "I know what you're up to. Get out, before I brain you with a chair. You'll not sell out these papers to that man Munson, see? Get out—or wait! Sit down. Sit down, I tell you!"

Jimmy watched while the cowardly negro slumped down in a chair. "Now then," said Jimmy, "you sit there five minutes, do you hear? Or I'll report you to Mr. Allison, Monday, and he'll fire you. I'm going. And I'm taking these reports with me, see? You tell Munson to come back some other time."

So saying, Jimmy tightened his grip on the papers under his arm, backed out of a side door into an adjoining office, hurried through it and two other rooms, and finally got out into the outer corridor without passing Munson. He did not wish to be followed, and he was sure all the office safes were locked so that he could not deposit the reports. He must take them with him to Westchester.

Out of breath, he caught a later train than the one he had intended to take, and slumped down in his seat with the bulky reports, all out of breath and, now that

the emergency had passed, suddenly nervous. Then he grinned as he thought of the wily Munson, still waiting for the bribed porter to bring him the papers.

At the Westchester station where he left the train, he found not Billy, but Mr. Armstrong himself, apologetic in Billy's absence, awaiting him.

"Bill's gone off on a picnic," said Mr. Armstrong. "Told him that was a shabby thing to do, but he said I could run you around to the place in my car, and take your things to the house afterward," he added.

"Never mind," exclaimed Jimmy, suddenly resolved to take a bold step. "I want to talk business with you, anyhow."

"Saturday afternoon?" queried Mr. Armstrong, as they got into the back of his luxurious motor.

"Got to act quick," said Jimmy. "Mr. Armstrong, what would you say if I told you Old Stony can save you twelve hours' freight time between Adamson and New York, and twenty-four between Adamson and the mines out west?"

"I'd say I'd take off my shirt and give it to Old Stony," laughed Mr. Armstrong. "Why? Kidding me?"

"No, you may have to deliver the shirt," Jimmy grinned. "Wait till we get to the house, and I'll show you something."

They spent the whole afternoon together in Mr. Armstrong's library, going over the confidential reports, on Mr. Armstrong's assurance that he would not use the information in any way detrimental to Jimmy or Old Stony.

"Jimmy," said the older man, as dinner-time approached, "you're a stem-winder. You've sold me on something that is worth a fortune to Universal Metals. We could move two other plants to Adamson and consolidate. In three years' time, this thing would be

savin us half a million freight a year, more time than I can estimate, and bring your road and Scogis, combined, a million dollars' worth of tonnage every twelve months."

"Well, there's the rub," remarked Jimmy glumly. "We don't see how we're going to do it."

"Going to do it?" echoed Mr. Armstrong. "Son, you won't have to do it." He overlooked Jimmy's unconsciously proud "we." "I'll see it's done myself, or Universal will. We spend money to save money. Here, you make a date for me with Mr. Allison for lunch Monday, see? It'll be done. That's that."

Jimmy, thrilling with pride and with thoughts only for the work he had boldly entered, had no heart for a football workout with Billy. Football seemed, of a sudden, rather childish. But back in the office Monday, he recovered his snap and dash.

"Mr. Allison," he said, "those papers——"

"Great gosh, where *are* they?" demanded the president. "I remembered at home Saturday I'd left them on the desk, and came all the way into town, to find them gone——"

"In my desk, now," said Jimmy. And he told the whole story, up to, but not including his interview with Mr. Armstrong. Mr. Allison, grateful, listened, with eyes wide open. "And now then, Mr. Allison, I'd like to make a luncheon date for you," he concluded.

"With whom?" asked the chief absently, thinking of the risk Jimmy had run in attacking the big negro to save the reports.

"Mr. Armstrong, of Universal Metal," Jimmy replied. "They have an enormous plant at Adamson, and he's interested——"

"Say no more, of course I'll meet him," snapped President Allison. "Get him on the wire."

Late that afternoon Mr. Allison was back in his

office, a tremendous load off his shoulders, a new fighting gleam in his eyes, as Jimmy saw when, in response to a call, he entered the president's room.

"Jimmy, you've done it," he exclaimed. "I'm proud of you, and grateful to you, and—oh, hang it, it beats the dickens how you happened on to this thing in the nick of time, when I'd apparently been beaten, and the committee thought I was whipped, and Morganross saw no way out. *But* Armstrong has agreed either to buy that branch line of P. M. and B., and resell to us, or failing that, to finance half the cost of an entire new line to hook us up with Scogis, by way of Adamson. *And* give us a raft of freight, to boot. Boy, you're good. A stem-winder——"

"Oh, it wasn't anything," began Jimmy, blushing like a schoolgirl.

"Armstrong was telling me about you," added Allison presently. "He says you are at Jordan on a railroad scholarship."

"Yes, sir," Jimmy replied.

"Does it pay all your expenses?"

"Yes, sir,—all except my board."

"What do you do about that?" asked Mr. Allison.

"Well, this year, I'm figuring on waiting table to pay my board, sir," said Jim.

"You won't have to," exclaimed Mr. Allison. "From September first, till June first, you'll be on leave of absence from Old Stony, on full pay. You've done a big day's work for us, and this may be a fairly decent day's work for us to do for you. What do you say?"

"Oh, gosh, Mr. Allison," said Jimmy, no longer the man of affairs, the user of "we" in railroad talk. "That's a big *year's* work for me. No table job. Time to play football! And maybe make the varsity! Oh, gosh, Mr. Allison!"

CHAPTER XVIII

STEP ELEVEN

"JORDAN is counting on you to play some good football at quarter-back this year, and I know you will not disappoint us. Practise opens September fifteenth. The rules forbid us from holding workouts before that date, but I am expecting every man who wants to play on the varsity this year to begin his own personal training on September 1. This is because our schedule is a hard one, and I want every man to be in condition for strenuous work when he reports. I hope you will take good care of yourself, beginning with the first; it may not be necessary for me to ask you, but I am asking every candidate."

Jimmy read and reread this letter from Coach Phillips as his train neared the university town. After his summer in New York, Jimmy had spent a few days in Cleveland with Les Moore, and a week with relatives in Wisconsin. Now, anxious to get back to the university, he was reaching the campus two days before school opened.

"Gosh," he exclaimed, as the train came to a stop, "it will be good to see the gang. Les and Billy will be here to-morrow. Maybe Jake's here already."

Suitcase in hand, he clambered down from the Chicago chair-car, the luxury of which he had bought because the ride from the Windy City was a long one, and the first man he saw was big Jake Hilligoss.

"Hi, Jim," yelled the black-haired giant, waving a big paw as he shouldered his way through the crowd gathered to meet incoming students. "How's the boy?"

"Jake, how you've grown," laughed Jimmy, dropping his suitcase for a handshake with him.

"Two hundred and twelve, an' natural!" exclaimed Jake. "But you don't look so bad yourself."

"I'm not a growing boy like you," Jimmy replied. "Weigh a hundred and sixty-two, at that, training in a railroad office."

"Poor little shrimp," muttered Jake, in mock sympathy. "Let's go out to the house and eat. Rush committee's got a car over here. Save all your steam, eat like a horse, and maybe you can get on the squad."

He grabbed Jimmy's suitcase with one hand, and Jimmy's arm with the other, and led the way to a car filled with boys. After a lot of handshaking, including the exchange of the fraternity grip, Jimmy piled in and the car whirled away to the campus. Jimmy, an orphan, felt that he was back home among his own people. Only the absence of Les and Billy kept the setting from being complete.

"When are Les and Bill coming?" asked Jake, as they entered the house.

"To-morrow, and they're coming together," Jimmy replied. "Billy came on from New York two or three days ago, and stopped to visit with Les. They said they would get in the day before school opens."

"Looks as if they might have come early enough to help with the rush," complained one of the older boys.

"But they're from so far away they don't know any of the fellows coming in," Jimmy explained, in quick defense of his pals.

"Neither do we know 'em—not all of 'em," was the retort. "Got to get acquainted. Need plenty of men to fill the house. Can you help?"

"Well, I don't know any of the state boys," said Jimmy, "but I'm ready to go to work right now."

He and Jake made arrangements to room together with a senior who, with a new freshman, would make

their room organization complete. And then they reported to the rush captain for duty. They spent the evening helping entertain prospective pledges for the fraternity, and both boys threw themselves into the spirit of the thing. Both, however, would have preferred talking football. Between times, for they were up and on the go until midnight, they found occasion to swap news. Jimmy told of his leave of absence with pay from the railroad, which would relieve him of the need for waiting table for his board.

"And my dad told me he'd pay my way this semester, so I could have a chance to make the team," said Jake. "If I make it, and make a B average in grades, he says he will figure some way to back me till I'm through school."

"You can swing it," Jimmy declared. "I wish Les and Billy would roll in."

"See 'em this summer, any?"

"Week-ended with Bill every week, and passed and kicked the old ball around," said Jim. "And I was at Les's house a week ago for a couple of days. Les looks good."

"Bill still spoiling his stomach?" queried Jake, with a grin.

"Thinks it will put on weight,—all this eating and drinking."

"Coach'll take that idea out of his head," said Jake confidently.

Next morning about six o'clock, Jimmy and Jake, sleeping in a double-decker bed in the top-floor dormitory, were rudely awakened. Jimmy, in the top bunk, was dragged out, and thrown unceremoniously upon Jake, sleeping below. And then other figures leaped upon the pair, to roll and rough them until they were wide awake. The two sleepers gave battle unconsciously until they got their eyes fairly opened, and

then they joyfully fell upon the newcomers and hugged them.

"Came on a night train," exclaimed husky Les Moore.

"Couldn't wait," added Billy, a tall slender chap. "And when we got here ahead of time to see you guys, here you are asleep. Fine kind of welcome——"

"Who're you to want a welcome?" demanded Jake roughly.

"Hey, you guys, get outa here," came a senior voice.

"Beat it, and let us sleep," shouted another.

The four of them went down-stairs to Jimmy's and Jake's room, where they sat for an hour talking of everything under the sun. Presently there was a lull in the excited conversation, and Jake Hilligoss, pulling on his trousers, spoke up in a slow deliberate voice.

"Listen, you fellows," he began. "There are three of you. I know you—Three Musketeers and all that applesauce. Well, there are four of us now, get that? To be on the square, you got to have four——"

"The Big Four," yelled Billy Armstrong.

"New York, Cleveland, Michigan and Wisconsin," added Les.

"*Big Four?*" queried a sleepy voice from the doorway. The boys looked around and beheld Tony Hammond, a senior law, Jimmy and Jake's senior, coming in from the dormitory to dress. "*Big Four?* Where do you get *that* stuff? Sophomores!"

"Four aces," declared Billy.

"Looks like a double-deuce, to me," retorted Hammond, stretching.

"And the Sign of the Four," added Billy, "is——"

"A twenty-yard gain," Les Moore came up with reinforcements.

"Five yards apiece,—that's us," Jake chimed in.

"That's the old gang," Jimmy applauded. "All for one, one for all."

"Our motto! Nine rahs for the Big Four," yelled Jake.

"Oh, you children run along now and get your oatmeal and milk," chided Hammond. "I've got a hard day ahead of me, and I want to start it right. Can't be bothered with you. Beat it!"

"Gosh, what a nice friendly senior you fellows have got," said Billy, near the door. He ducked out into the corridor a step ahead of a flying shoe, flung hard at him by Hammond.

"Say, young fellow," roared Hammond, leaping toward the door. But Billy was well out of reach, and the other three sophomores followed him, careful not to offend the lordly senior themselves. At breakfast the members of the new Big Four enjoyed themselves in riotous reunion. They talked football more than anything else, for all were anxious to get out upon the field and start in pursuit of regular places on the varsity eleven. Jake reported that he had been working on a farm all summer, and felt tough as leather. Les said he had spent most of the summer in a steel-mill.

"And Coach's letter asking me to go in training,—that gave me a laugh," he added. "Why, I was already hard as nails when I got it."

"Gave me a laugh, too," said Billy. "Punk idea—training before the season starts. I'll start training to-morrow at noon, when the practise season begins,—and not till then."

"That's no spirit," commented Jake.

"And when you guys are all stale, half-way through the schedule, I'll be in the old pink, rarin' to go."

"If we all did that, we'd lose all the early games," Jimmy pointed out. "Nope, Billy, we got to begin now, if we haven't started already."

"Not me," Billy insisted.

"But the coach's letter asked us——" began Jake slowly.

"But he's not our boss till school opens, I tell you," Billy declared.

Jimmy Byers said nothing for he feared that further opposition would merely make Billy all the more stubborn. He waited for an opportunity to talk to Billy alone, but the opportunity did not come, for the rush committee took charge of the four a little later, and sent them hurrying on errands for the fraternity. Before noon, happening to pass the Soda Keg, Jimmy saw Billy inside with two other boys, one obviously a new freshman, regaling himself with ice-cream drinks.

Disappointed, for he was old-fashioned enough to want to do everything thoroughly and well, Jimmy hoped that Billy would go no further in his disregard of training requirements. Even the beginning of football practise calls for fairly good condition on the part of candidates. He wanted Les, and Billy and Jake, all three, to have every chance at the varsity, along with himself. And he knew that Billy, although clever and quick, a fast runner and a good ball-handler, lacked the physique to withstand a hard game. All the more reason, he felt, why Billy, even more than the other three of the Big Four, should train carefully.

A few minutes after he passed the Soda Keg, he met Coach Phillips, who greeted him heartily and stopped to chat. When the coach passed on, Jimmy turned about to watch him and saw, with some misgivings, that he entered the Soda Keg. At noon he missed Billy. During the afternoon, he went to the gymnasium, found some light track togs, and went out on the football field to pass and kick a ball about for an hour or two. Jake appeared, too, but Les and Billy

did not come out. A number of candidates for the team cavorted about the gridiron, and most of them ran half a mile before going to the gym. The coach, of course, did not appear, for rules prevented him from working with his squad until the morrow.

That evening Jimmy's misgivings were justified. And the day that had begun so joyfully for the Big Four turned to dull gloom.

"Call for Kangaroo Court, call for Kangaroo Court," a voice shouted through the corridors of the fraternity house, about eleven o'clock. Rush entertainment was over for the evening. Most of the boys, Jimmy among them, were getting ready for bed.

"Hear ye, hear ye, oyez, oyez," came the shout. "Call for Kangaroo Court!"

This was new stuff to Jim Byers. As a freshman, he had never been hailed into Kangaroo Court for any offense, and as that is the only way in which a freshman gets into court, he had naturally learned nothing of it. In common with all others hearing the cry, however, he turned out. Sophomores, juniors and seniors gathered in the big living-room, where they found Tony Hammond enthroned on a big chair behind a long table, placed crosswise at one end of the room.

"Quiet in the court-room," cried Tony, banging on the table.

The boys, in all stages of dress and undress, scrambled for chairs and tables on which to rest. Some of them squatted on the floor. Kangaroo Court, in case you have never been hailed to appear before it, is an informal but very serious affair. Jim watched proceedings with interest, not dreaming what was to come.

"Let the prisoner be brought in," shouted Tony Hammond.

Almost instantly big Les Moore and Billy Armstrong appeared through the door of the sun-room, in

which they had evidently been waiting. Jimmy guessed who was prisoner, and who his keeper.

"Bring him before the bar," Tony ordered. Billy, with a foolish grin, shuffled to a position in front of the Kangaroo Judge. "What's the charge, Officer?" Tony demanded of Les.

"Drinking," replied Les, in a low tone, as if unwilling to speak.

"A serious charge," commented the judge, shaking his head solemnly. "Prisoner at the bar, I am your judge. These good men and true are your jury. Have you an attorney, or shall I name one to represent you?"

"Jim Byers," mumbled Billy thickly. "Good ol' Jim Byers, that's my 'torney."

"A very able pleader, and I was about to name him for you myself," said Tony Hammond. "And opposed to him will be Jerry Davis, of moot court fame. Mr. Davis, as prosecutor."

Jimmy, surprised at the whole situation, did not know what to do. He was horrified at the thought that Billy had been drinking. Looking hastily about him, he saw that other boys present apparently knew no more about the circumstances than he did. And he hardly knew whether proceedings were in fun, or really serious.

"Are the attorneys ready? Take your corners, gentlemen," proclaimed Tony facetiously. "Now then, let the case proceed."

Noting that Davis took his place at one end of the table, Jimmy got to his feet and stationed himself at the other end.

"The officer will tell his story, your Honor," said Davis, a short fat youth of probably twenty-three years. He waved a plump hand at Les.

"Officer," commanded Tony Hammond.

"Your Honor," began Les, "I stopped in at the Soda

Keg with the prisoner about half past nine, to get myself a glass of milk. He ordered a double chocolate cream. Before I had finished my milk, he had another double chocolate. While he was drinking it, Dory Hawkins came in. He ordered one, too. Then Coach Phillips came in and caught us. He asked us if that was the way we got in shape for football.

"Billy,—uh, the prisoner, your Honor, said he never got in shape for football till it was time to play it. Hawkins said that football didn't start till to-morrow. I said I was only drinking a glass of milk. 'I'm not talking to you, Moore,' he said. 'I'm talking to Armstrong and Hawkins. You two boys,' he said to them, 'have a tough row to hoe to make the varsity. And after you make it, the going is tougher than ever. I asked you, as a favor to me, to Jordan, and to yourselves, to take good care of yourself from September first on. Is that the way you do it?'

"Well, your Honor, they both talked back to him, and he got mad and said, 'Well, if that's the way you feel, you need not report for suits to-morrow afternoon,' and he went out. Then the prisoner and Hawkins, your Honor, went to Hawkins' room——"

"You went along too," spoke up Billy.

"The prisoner will be quiet," admonished the Kangaroo Judge.

"Only to look after you," flared up Les angrily. "And in Hawkins' room, they had two bottles apiece. Two bottles——"

"Only bottles?" demanded the judge. "What was in them?"

"As near as I could judge——"

But Jimmy interrupted, speaking for the first time since proceedings began. "Didn't they offer you a bottle?" he asked.

"What was in them?" insisted the judge.

"No," Les replied to Jimmy. "As near as I could judge, it was pop. The bottles looked like pop bottles. The labels wore some kind of soft drink labels, too. I asked the prisoner and Hawkins not to drink the stuff——"

"Pop, pop?" demanded Tony Hammond severely, pointing a finger at Bill.

"Yes, pop, that's all it was," exclaimed Billy sullenly. "I've been kidding Les by pretending to be drunk, and——"

"This court will be the judge of your condition," said the judge. "Be quiet."

"But they drank it, and we started home," continued Les. "I reported to the judge of this court, what had happened, and that is my story."

"A very *serious*, a *very* serious story indeed," pronounced the Kangaroo Judge, in all solemnity.

"And it constitutes our presentation of evidence, your Honor," added Jerry Davis, the prosecutor, looking with pity upon the prisoner.

"What has the defense to offer?" asked the judge, turning to Jimmy.

"I will ask my client, your Honor," began Jimmy hopefully, "to quote for the court his apology to Coach Phillips. I will ask him to tell the court what he said, or promised to the coach, to reinstate himself, so that he may play football."

Billy Armstrong flashed a quick look of resentment at his old buddy, and then turned to face the Kangaroo Judge.

"You can bet your life I didn't do any such thing," he exclaimed. "When he told me I needn't report for football to-morrow, I said, 'That suits me. If you want me to train *in* football season, O. K. If you want me to train *out* of season, nothing stirring.' That's the apology I made."

"And I will ask the prisoner to state whether, in his opinion, he is now barred from football," said Jimmy, sick all through at the situation Billy had provoked.

"Abso-doggoned-lutely," declared Billy.

It should be said that throughout the proceedings thus far, the fraternity members made smart cracks, and laughed, or nodded their heads in approbation of developments, according to their inclinations. All of them knew they would have to vote on the situation, one way or another, and all of them took the responsibility more seriously than their behavior would seem to indicate.

"Any further testimony?" the judge asked. Jimmy shook his head. "Then the court will hear the argument for the defense."

"May it please the court," Jimmy said, clearing his throat, "I will plead the defendant's youth. He is awfully young. I expect he is one of the youngest men, in actions at least, that we have around here. It will be a horrible blow to his father, who looks to him to make good. And then it will be a blow to all of us, who are his friends, if he should be punished for something he did thoughtlessly."

"Nothing of the kind, I knew what I was doing," growled Billy stubbornly.

"Finally, I will plead that his future good behavior will be looked after," continued Jimmy. "We have a new organization among us sophomores who want to play football. It is what we call the 'Big Four,' and besides the prisoner, your Honor, the members are the officer here, Hilligoss and myself. We will guarantee that the prisoner makes no more outbreaks, if the court will find him not guilty as charged."

"Yes, you will," grumbled Billy, in sarcasm.

"Silence in the court," yelled the Kangaroo Judge. "The prosecutor will argue for the Kangaroo State."

"Your Honor, and gentlemen of the jury," began Jerry Davis, Kangaroo Prosecutor, "it was in my mind to plead this cause as I found it. But the whole thing makes me sick, and I'm sorry I can not go through regular judicial procedure. I'm too hot. What gripes me is this counsel here promising to roll over and play dead and all that kind of rot for Coach Phillips. Coach had no right to kick these two men off his squad, because school is not open yet. He's not their nurse. After to-morrow, all right. But not to-day. Now then, didn't he go and give old Hilly Hilligoss a raw deal last year? Hasn't he got it in for all our gang? Everybody knows it!

"So I move you that this court instruct this prisoner to sit tight on this football stuff, and abstain from apology to the coach; and also that all other members of this fraternity abstain from football until the matter is settled, and this prisoner is again playing football. We got to show this coach he can't pull that high-handed stuff on us. He's got it in for us, or he wouldn't kick one of our men off the squad before the season opens, what I mean."

Jerry Davis, fat and red-faced, was working himself into an angry pitch.

"We have got good football men, but they are *men* before they are football men. They will not be put upon like this! He has got to treat us like men, not like children. So I move this motion, as aforesaid: That said prisoner abstain from football and apologies, and all our football men likewise abstain until such time as and when the prisoner's status is cleared."

"Say, you fat fish, who said Hilly got a raw deal last year?" demanded big Jake Hilligoss. "He's my brother, and I know——"

"Silence in the court," demanded Hammond, pounding the table with his book.

"Your Honor, in argument upon that motion——" began Jimmy Byers, his face white. He now realized that the situation, provoked by a little thing, was really serious. He knew the fraternity could bind its members, and that the court, convened in comedy, might be dismissed as the climax to tragedy.

"The motion is not debatable," snapped Jerry Davis.

"The court will decide about that," said Jimmy. "Your Honor——"

But before the Kangaroo Judge could rule on the question, or Jimmy could plead for his right to argue, the Kangaroo Court took matters in its own hands. Swayed by the appeal of Jerry Davis, and tired of the comedy as well, the boys set up a shout.

"Question, question! Put the motion," they yelled.

"Quiet, please," demanded Judge Hammond. "The prosecution's argument closes the case——"

"But——" began Jimmy, only to be shut off.

"And besides that, the jury demands its right to render a verdict," the Kangaroo Judge ruled. "Will the jury retire?"

"I'm foreman," declared a big, raw-boned youngster. "I say we'll not retire till we've voted on this case. Then me for the hay!"

"Very well. You've heard the motion. All in favor, say 'Aye.'"

A roar of "ayes" went up, and when the Kangaroo Judge asked for negative opinions, none was heard. The motion carried, and Jimmy, Les and big Jake were forbidden to play football! They heard the verdict with sinking hearts, and looked at one another in dismay. Without paying any attention to the boys, the crowd, laughing and singing, broke up. Jimmy sat down on the end of the judge's table, stunned with the result of all the horse-play.

"Has this gang gone crazy?" demanded Jake Hilligoss. "They can't tell *me* I'm not to play football."

"Nor me, either," echoed Les Moore. "Wish I'd never got into this mess."

"Thirty of them against the three of us," Jimmy pointed out. "The whole chapter against us, just because Billy acted dumb, and Davis got 'em stirred up."

"We can move out," suggested Les.

"And leave Billy to run wild?" queried Jim. "What would his folks think of us if we did that?"

"Well, he's certainly old enough to have more sense, all I got to say," declared Jake.

"Who you talkin' about?" Billy demanded angrily.

"The boy with the big tummy and the big bank-roll," Jake replied.

The others laughed at this terse description of Billy, and he had to grin, himself.

"You've got us in a nice mess, Bill," said Jimmy. "Here are three of us that want to play football, counted on it, dreamed about it. All of us have a chance, too. And now, on your account, we're barred. What are you going to do about it?"

"Me? Not a thing in the world," said Billy. "He can't kick me off his squad before school opens, and expect me to come whining around like a baby and ask for another chance. If I want an ice-cream soda——"

"All over a soda, hey?" he was interrupted. Kangaroo Judge Hammond had come back into the room. "Thought maybe you'd need an arbitrator."

"You'd be a hot one, seeing what kind of a judge you were," protested Jake.

"Maybe so, and maybe not," grinned Tony. "Now then, no use staying here all night. What are you three guys going to do?"

"Play football," replied Jimmy, Les and Jake.

"But the gang says you can't," Tony objected.

"Then I can walk out on the gang," said Jim firmly. "I'd hate to do it, but——"

"I'm with you," declared Les Moore.

"Make it three," added Jake quickly.

"No, no,—you mean that?" asked Tony, apparently realizing for the first time that the boys were in deadly earnest. He looked at one and then another. And Billy Armstrong, shaken now out of his jaunty aloofness, also studied the three by turns.

"Exactly that," said Jim Byers doggedly. "Billy can eat all the ice-cream he wants. He has a right to. But even with this bunch behind him, he has no right to stop us from playing football."

"You'd walk out on the gang?" asked Tony, again.

For answer, all three nodded.

"Well, the only answer to that is, it's up to Billy, here," said Tony presently. "Kangaroo Court says you men can not play until he is playing. That's half of it. Court says he can not apologize. That's the other half. If you walk out, so you can play football, we can't do anything about it. If Billy apologizes——"

"Don't worry, I won't," muttered Billy, in a hang-dog manner.

"The court would probably duck him in a tub of cold water," the Kangaroo Judge concluded. "We'd hate like everything to see you three walk out. But we'd probably get a lot of fun out of ducking Billy."

"Oh, you guys are always talking about the Three Musketeers, and now it's all about the Big Four," began Billy petulantly. "And this 'one for all, and all for one' stuff, too. That's applesauce. Here I'm in a hole, and you're all against me."

"You're against three of us," admitted Jimmy. "But we're three *for* you, and you know it, Bill Arm-

strong. You got into that hole yourself, and now you're trying to drag us down into it with you."

"Oh, gosh, gee whiz," grinned Billy sheepishly, "you certainly bear down on a fellow, don't you?"

"Aw, come out of it, Bill," pleaded Les Moore.

"Of course, as judge of the Kangaroo Court, I have the authority to name the executioners of any sentence," said Tony Hammond, with a grin. "If I heard that Armstrong apologized, or called up the coach, or anything, I could certainly name the huskiest and handiest man to duck him in the tub. Three, I think, should be enough."

"They can't do it," yelled Billy Armstrong. "Let 'em try it, let 'em——" but he did not finish the dare. A high tackle,—that was Jake Hilligoss. A low one,—that was Jimmy Byers. One in the middle,—that was Les Moore. Billy Armstrong, for one reputed to be in poor condition, put up a good battle against odds.

"Twenty-two minutes, by my watch," muttered Tony Hammond, from a safe spot outside the bathroom door. "Too bad the gang could not have seen the fight. Twenty-two minutes,—who says justice is not prompt?"

It was almost one o'clock, but Billy, laughing and chiding his pals for their inability to duck him more quickly, traped down the hall in his bathrobe, to telephone Coach Phillips. Jimmy, Jake and Les, a load off their shoulders, breathed hard, but with relief.

That afternoon the Big Four drew football togs. And Jimmy Byers drew a long breath as he faced the last long climb up to varsity heights.

CHAPTER XIX

TOP STEP

"IF THEY get hard with us, we'll get just a little harder with them," declared Billy. "We're as tough as they are."

"Or tougher," added Les. "Carry this old football war into Africa."

"Fight fire with fire, hey?" queried Jimmy thoughtfully. "My dad used to be stationed at a western army post, and I've heard him tell how they built a fire to stave off a prairie fire. Only way to stop it. If Tippecanoe thinks it can blaze through here like a prairie fire, we'll burn 'em up."

The Big Four was on its way from the fraternity house to the gymnasium to dress for the last hard game of a hard football season,—the annual and traditional battle with Tippecanoe. Armstrong, Moore and Jimmy walked along through the campus with the fourth and newest member of the sophomore brotherhood, big Jake Hilligoss. The first three, working themselves into a fighting pitch to meet the roughest, toughest team on Jordan's schedule, talked things over. Each of them vowed to battle to the limit.

"And if they pull anything raw on us, we'll be right there to give them as good as they send," exclaimed Les, proud of the regular job at right half-back his speed, punting ability and one hundred and seventy-six pounds of bone and muscle had won.

"Fight fire with fire," echoed Billy, subbing at end. "Just as Jimmy says. Hey, Jake, big boy?" He slapped the huge Hilligoss on his broad back. Jake, weighing two hundred and twelve pounds, had made

himself a star at center in his first year on the varsity. He was muscularly built and the most powerful man, on defense or attack, on the squad. If any one of the Big Four was qualified to meet rough play with rough play, Big Jake was the man.

"Oh, I don't know about that," drawled the huge fellow slowly. "Depends on the fire, how you treat it. Some fires, now, you put ice on 'em."

"Where do you get *that* stuff?" demanded Billy.

"Well, you take an internal fire, a fever, for instance," said Jake, a student in the college of medicine. "Any doctor knows you ice down a fever. If these guys get to burning up——"

"Hey, we don't want to cure 'em," protested Les Moore, laughing. "We want to kill 'em. Just like doctors," he added sarcastically.

The others, even Big Jake himself, joined in the laughter at this sally, and then the conversation lagged for the four approached the steps of the gymnasium. They had to push and shove their way through the crowd of students and alumni besieging the gym doors as usual before a big game. Jimmy, the smallest of the quartet, brought up the rear, his head down, his thoughts on Big Jake's suggestion. If Big Jake wanted to fight, or the Tippecanoe men jumped him, he could handle almost any two of them. But if Big Jake thought playing football was the best way to win a football game, of course he was right.

Jimmy played quarter-back and was regarded by Coach Phillips as the best pilot for the eleven, despite his lack of weight. Dory Hawkins, taller and weighing one hundred and eighty pounds, alternated with Jimmy at quarter and, after a long and bitter feud marked by two fights with the smaller chap, still felt himself the better man. He resented Jimmy's appearance among the sophomores in his last year, when he

should have had sole possession of the quarter-back's berth. True, he was better equipped for the job as regards speed, weight, punting and passing ability, but he lacked Jimmy's smartness and uncanny judgment of situations and plays.

Coach Phillips, sizing up the two carefully, had used Hawkins a great deal of the time, saving Jimmy for crucial periods when smart work counted most. He feared to start the smaller boy in a hard game for fear he might be injured and thus lost for emergencies when he might be most valuable. Jimmy, cock-sure of his ability to protect himself, felt hurt over this policy of the coach but like a good soldier said nothing and followed orders. Just the same to-day, as always, he yearned to fight the battle through from beginning to end. He wanted to be a regular.

"You've got all the football I know how to teach you," proclaimed Coach Phillips, to the squad before going out upon the field for the struggle. "It is up to you. Let me repeat what I said in the first place. This game is a *battle*. Tippecanoe has a big, strong, rough and tough team. They hit hard. They hit to hurt. Every man is in there to whip his man. That means *you*! Are you going to be whipped? Not if you fight! Play your string out, and carry the fight to them! Beat them to every punch! And the game is ours. Let's go!"

Tippecanoe, favored to win the game by reason of four straight victories in the Conference, took the field with a cocky confident air. The Tippecanoe men knew they were good, and meant to convince Jordan of that fact. Jordan, on the other hand, had won two of three Conference contests already played. Jordan needed victory to finish well in the Conference. Jordan remembered two defeats by Tippecanoe in the last two annual games. And Jordan, the under dog, determined

to win for the sake of the thousands of home-folks thronged in the stands and demanding victory.

On the side-lines after a preliminary warming-up exercise, all the Jordan squad eyed Coach Phillips expectantly. Captain Day Caldwell, a sterling end playing his last year for Jordan, returned to the bench after the toss-up.

"All right, boys, let's go," called Coach Phillips. He quickly named the seven forwards, including Hilligoss at center. "And Moore, take right half. Billings, left half. Johnson, full. Ah,—Hawkins, quarter. Heads up, everybody!"

Eager for battle, the eleven trotted out on the field and lined up. Sick at heart, little Jim Byers drew a blanket about him and settled down on the bench near Coach Phillips. Beside him huddled lanky Billy Armstrong, also disappointed.

"C'mon, snap out of it," whispered Billy. "We'll both be in there before long, see if we're not."

"Sure," agreed Jimmy. "Let's look 'em over."

And, with ears open for the running fire of comment kept up by Coach Phillips, they proceeded to look things over. What they saw was four eyes' full, thousands of eyes' full, of first-rate hammer and tongs football, most of it played by the powerful Tippecanoe eleven. Tippecanoe took possession of the game early, and dominated it with strength.

"Man, look at those tackles," whispered Jimmy. He referred to two tall, powerfully built fellows named, oddly enough, Black and White. Black, at right tackle, and White, at left, seemed great pillars of strength in the Tippecanoe line-up.

"Aw, nobody's tryin' to handle 'em," Billy complained.

"They take some handling," Jimmy replied. "They're good."

Tippecanoe, after receiving the punt, came pounding down the field with a steady succession of short sharp gains. All of them were made off the tackles. Black and White crashed the side of the Jordan line in toward the center on each play, and Tippecanoe backs slashed outside them for consistent gains. Les Moore and Billings were worn to a frazzle stopping plays that their forwards should have at least annoyed or slowed down somewhat. In a few minutes Tippecanoe had come smashing to the goal-line, only to see ill luck intervene. A fumbled pass lost the ball to Jordan, the alert Captain Caldwell falling on the leather behind the Tippecanoe lines.

"Gosh, that's a chance to get our breath," chattered Billy.

"Wish our tackles would get out wider," muttered Jimmy.

Hawkins punted on first down this time, and, despite Billy's prediction, Jordan found no time for breath-taking. Tippecanoe came back again, pounding harder and more relentlessly than ever. Once more chance favored Jordan, for when Tippecanoe arrived at the goal-line with a series of five- and eight-yard gains, the Tippecanoe quarter-back made a mistake. Instead of calling the powerful off-tackle play again, and depending on Black or White to sweep a path for a touch-down, he chose a play through the center of the line.

"Look at Jake nail him!" yelled Billy, exulting.

Jake Hilligoss, charging in as fast as the Tippecanoe full-back thrashed toward him, flung his man for a loss. Jordan took the ball. Hawkins foolishly called a line play, and Tippecanoe stacked it. Dory started a signal for another play, but Captain Caldwell intervened. Hawkins then called for a punt, and himself booted the ball out of danger for the moment.

This time, furious over being thwarted twice in efforts to score, Tippecanoe came down like a hurricane upon defenseless sailors. A gale off right tackle,—a storm through left tackle, a typhoon around the right side, a squall past the left. Black and White by turns blew and blasted their way into Jordan territory. Behind them, each time, came a Tippecanoe ball-carrier. And presently, inevitably, Tippecanoe scored a touchdown. The goal, kicked while Jordan rooters groaned in despair and Jordan players ground their teeth in helpless rage, made the score: Tippecanoe seven, Jordan nothing.

"Too much power, too much power," groaned Coach Phillips, shaking his head.

"Coach, wouldn't it help if our tackles moved out wider?" asked Jimmy in a low tone.

"Yes, but I can't send in a sub to tell 'em now; those linemen are the best I've got," the coach replied.

Jimmy resumed his position.

Captain Caldwell urged his mates to better efforts, and the quarter, by good luck, ended with no further scoring. During the intermission Jimmy looked hopefully at Coach Phillips, but if the coach was thinking of using him, he gave no sign. Play began again, and Jimmy hunched down on the bench to wait. It was not long until he had his chance. The Tippecanoe quarter-back tried a forward pass, which Les Moore batted down. Tippecanoe essayed a line play, and Jake Hilligoss threw it for a loss. Tippecanoe punted. Dory Hawkins caught the ball and made a nice run back, but was thrown in mid-field.

Exultant over his gain, Dory called a play for himself off tackle. The giant White threw him for a loss of five yards. Suddenly furious, Dory called on Les Moore for a try at the same place. Les made a yard, but White dragged him down.

"Try me again, try me again," yelled White, gloating.

"Big boy, we'll get you," Hawkins shouted angrily. He rallied the backs around him, and demanded another assault on White's position. Johnson took the ball, and Moore charged in ahead for interference. White smashed in hard, caught the hapless big Les in the thighs and crumpled him back atop the oncoming Johnson. Fighting ahead, White crashed the full-back to earth with the ball, and it was fourth down. Hawkins, by his blind insistence on fighting White, had wasted three precious downs!

Jimmy groaned, at the same time aching for a chance to help whip the great Tippecanoe tackles. Until they were crushed——But should time be wasted crushing these two men, when a football game waited to be won?

"Byers, Byers!" snapped Coach Phillips, taking advantage of the interval.

"Yes, sir," echoed Jimmy, leaping to his feet and throwing off the blanket.

"In there, quick, for Hawkins. Tell the tackles,—quick."

"Anything else?" panted Jimmy excitedly.

"No, beat it."

"Coach," and Jimmy hesitated an instant, an eye on the field, "give me Armstrong, please?"

Now, Coach Phillips had worked Jimmy and Billy all through the fall, in games and out, as a forward passing combination. The lanky Armstrong seemed a veritable ball hawk, and Jimmy, through long practise, had developed a team-work that had become almost uncanny in its accuracy. The coach sensed Jimmy's idea intuitively.

"On your way, quick," he snapped. "Armstrong! In there, for Jenkins, right end."

Jimmy raced out upon the field in time to get the referee's attention before Dory Hawkins could call another play. The whistle blew. Jimmy reported, and the scowling Hawkins dragged himself disconsolately off the field. Hard upon Jim's heels came Armstrong. Jimmy studied the situation while the officials were checking the changes in line-up. Jordan had the ball, fourth down, at mid-field. If Jordan punted, the kicker would either have to put the ball out of bounds, which could not always be done, or over the goal-line, in which case it would be Tippecanoe's ball on the Tippecanoe twenty-yard line. Jimmy tried the daring thing!

He called a punt formation, with Les Moore back in the kicking position. He went back himself as if to block for Les.

"Aw, come on in here," mocked White loudly. "Let me in the game."

"You'll have to come back here," yelled Les, in defiance.

"Eight, eighty-eight, seven, eighty-four," began Jimmy in a loud firm voice.

Back came the ball in a pretty spiral pass from Hilligoss to Les Moore. Tippecanoe knew a punt was the only logical thing in the circumstances, and deployed for it. Forwards came charging through, headed by the shouting White, to block the kick. Ends and half-backs went back down the field, to block off Jordan ends and protect the receiver of the expected kick.

Long-legged Billy Armstrong raced toward the Tippecanoe goal, and Les poised to punt.

Just as the burly White and another Tippecanoe man flung themselves upon Les, he stepped aside, and flipped the ball to Jimmy. Byers, without hesitating, whirled and flung it far down the field, to the right

and outside Billy Armstrong. But as if working on a mechanism operated by Jimmy's throwing arm, Billy turned out at the same instant, instead of inward toward the blocking half-back, and raced over to intercept the ball.

The play, daring as it was beautiful, worked. Billy snagged the ball, and sprinted to the five-yard line before he was downed by the wide-awake Tippecanoe safety man. Jordan stands went wild in enthusiasm, while Jordan players yelled and clapped one another on the back. Tippecanoe men smarted under the trick.

"Get you next time, smart guy," yelled White at Jimmy, as he lined up again on the five-yard line.

"Here's your chance," snapped Jimmy quickly. "You're our meat, big boy!"

Suiting the action to the threat, he promptly called an off-tackle play at White's position. Les Moore took the ball, for a one-yard gain.

"That's my dish," growled White. "Serve me a second helping."

"Hold your plate," snapped Jim, and quickly sent Johnson charging at the same place. White, roaring with glee to accept the challenge, charged in. He stopped the Jordan full-back short with perhaps a gain of two feet.

"Is the boy crazy?" moaned Coach Phillips. "Might as well have left Hawkins in there. Jim's fighting that tackle——"

"I'm hungry, feed me some more," chortled White.

"This time, this time," exclaimed Jim Byers quietly, as if repressing hot anger. He took a step toward the huge tackle, and pointed his finger at him.

Then he called his signal again. The back field lined up in precisely the same manner, and Moore, Johnson and Billings went charging fiercely at the

big tackle. He let out a roar, charged in hard and low, and the Tippecanoe backs rushed over to support him. But this time Jimmy, stooping low, held the ball he had taken on a short pass from Hilligoss. Instead of jabbing it at Moore, Johnson or Billings as they rushed to the attack on White, he tucked it in against his stomach, folded both arms around it, and ducked into the line behind the hard-smashing Hilligoss. The Tippecanoe defense, was caught asleep. Big Jake bowled over a half-back hurrying across to back up White, and Jimmy, in behind him, ducked out from cover and scurried quickly over the goal-line! Touch-down, six points, before Tippecanoe knew what had happened.

Before the uproar that followed the momentary dazed silence subsided, Jimmy lined up his team, took a pass from Hilligoss, and held the ball so that Les could boot it over the cross bar for the trying point. Tippecanoe seven, Jordan seven!

"That boy, that boy," muttered Phillips. "And I thought he was crazy! Too good."

The reaction of the giant White was not so pleasant. He shouted defiance at Jimmy and the whole Jordan team, and slapped and kicked his team-mates to rouse them, until the Tippecanoe captain reminded him he had twice been the goat in smart Jordan plays.

"I'll get 'em, I'll get 'em," he yelled, burning for revenge.

Get 'em he did, a few minutes later. Jordan received the kick-off, but Jimmy, after catching the ball and returning it to his forty-yard line, could not engineer gains through, inside or outside the ranging tackles, Black and White. He called on Les to punt. When Tippecanoe lined up to come back down the field, Jimmy quickly shifted the Jordan linemen, as per his own ideas and the instructions of the coach,

moving the tackles out farther from center, the better to block Tippecanoe's off-tackle game. At the same time, to complete this new style of defense, he stationed Hilligoss and Moore close up behind the line, near the gaps between tackles and guards.

Tippecanoe gamely tried two of these off-tackle smashes that had been so successful earlier in the game, although playing from her twenty-yard line. But neither White nor Black, facing the new defense, could solve it in time to clear a way for a gain. This served to make White still angrier than he had been. Tippecanoe punted on third down, and Jimmy caught the kick. It was a high ball, and he had no sooner tucked it under his arm than he was hit by an avalanche that roared and yelled as it hit him.

It was White, smarting under the tricks that had been worked upon him. Before he let Jimmy up from the ground, he had twisted an arm. An instant later, breaking through to block a Jordan punt, he shifted his attention from Les Moore to Jimmy, and bore the little quarter to the ground, digging an elbow into his stomach. In the next half-dozen plays he dropped all thought of playing football, and centered his attention on Jimmy, whom he outweighed by fully fifty pounds. Jimmy refused to complain to the referee, although White's tactics were raw. Likewise, he refused to endanger himself by trying to fight back. Five minutes before the quarter ended, the boy was done up.

"Coach sent me in," he heard a new voice saying to him. Dimly he saw a boy named Whitmore, a sub half-back, confronting him.

"But I can't stop now," cried Jimmy.

"Coach says——" began Whitmore.

"It's all right, kid," exclaimed Captain Caldwell, patting Jim on the shoulder. "You come back and we'll take 'em in the second half."

Reluctantly, Jimmy crawled toward the side-lines, to collapse when he was within twenty feet of the bench. Coach Phillips, himself, picked him up and turned him over to the trainer, who with the help of two substitutes, literally carried the aching, sobbing youngster to the gym for treatment.

"What chance for Byers next half?" demanded Coach Phillips, the instant he entered the dressing-room.

"Twisted arm, stomach muscle torn, wrenched leg, and busted an ankle where that big dude tramped on it," summarized the trainer. He was still working on Jimmy, the boy stretched out on a table, undergoing all kinds of rubbing, taping and oiling.

"Can he get out?" asked Phillips anxiously. "Got the score tied. Got to score some more if we win. Need him——"

"Try to keep me out," muttered Jimmy, in a whisper. He seemed oblivious to the hurts to his body. But a fever, whether of anxiety, or fighting rage, or a disordered system, seemed to be burning him through and through.

"Atta boy," exclaimed Phillips, and turned his attention to the squad, sprawled about on the floor and the benches.

When the third period was ten minutes old, the trainer came down to the field from the varsity quarters with Jimmy Byers. Jimmy hobbled somewhat as he walked, he held his twisted arm away from him in gingerly fashion, and his stomach, wound with tape to protect the sore muscles, hurt as if a knife were being twisted through it. But he wore a grin on his face, and he had a gleam in his eye. His head ached and throbbed and he felt hot, as if he were in a Turkish bath. But the gleam in his eye told of a fighting purpose, and bespoke a clear and active brain.

"Here's the boy," exclaimed Coach Phillips. "Need you in a minute."

Jimmy, glad of a place to sit down and rest, slumped upon the bench beside the coach, and joined him in watching closely the fighting defense put up by the Jordan eleven. Tippecanoe had gone back to its favorite off-tackle style of play, and was grinding down the field steadily, with Black and White alternately sweeping a path for the ball-carrying backs. But the wide tackle defense installed by Jimmy, and the frenzied backing-up done by Moore and Hilligoss were combining to make the battle for ground a desperate one. Twice Tippecanoe made first downs by inches. A third time, Jordan held and took the ball. Unable to gain, Hawkins called a punt. Back came Tippecanoe again, fighting hard.

If Jimmy had known it, his mates out on the field were fighting for him, under an urgent plea from the captain to win the game he had saved for them. Every Jordan warrior was hitting hard, sharp and clean. Every tackle was crisp and bold. Jordan was holding her own, but wearing down. And Tippecanoe, ever more aggressive and rampant, slowed down only a little. So they battled, down to within five minutes of the final gun. Jim Byers, aching for his chance, saw the minutes slip past and the game fading out while he sat on the bench.

Then came a break, Jordan, back to the wall, held for downs on the twenty-five yard line. Hawkins called a play, but no gain. A second failed. A third lost ground. And reluctantly, Dory signaled a punt. This was the break,—a punt fumbled by the Tippecanoe safety man when Billy Armstrong tackled him in the open field, and recovered by Caldwell, down just as fast as Billy. The Jordan captain snatched the ball and tried to get away for a run to the goal-line,

but was dragged down on the Tippecanoe fifteen-yard mark.

"Byers, Byers, in there, quick," yelled Coach Phillips. "Try anything. Beat it! Punch it over, boy."

"Coach, listen, Coach," Jimmy appealed, as he struggled painfully out of his blanket and sheepskin jacket. "Leave Hawkins in."

"Billings out?" queried Phillips. "O. K. Hop to it."

And Jimmy, his head aching, his brain in a fever, ran limping out on the field for the second time. He knew he should report to the referee, but he did so mechanically, absently, not knowing whether he did it properly or not. He was thinking about fires, and fire-fighting. Fight fire with fire, he kept repeating to himself. No, with water. No, that's not right. Fight fire with ice,—that's the ticket! Old Jake Hilligoss said so, and he ought to know. He's a doctor. Ice and fire. And what he said to the referee was:

"Byers for Billings, sir. Jake Hilligoss says so. Fight fire with ice."

The referee wondered if Coach Phillips could be sending a crazy man into the game, and grasped Jimmy by the arm and shook him. Jimmy grinned.

"All right, sir. Talkin' too much, I guess."

He joined his team, and Dory Hawkins angrily jerked off his head-gear. It was the second time he'd been yanked in favor of this little shrimp——

"Keep your shirt on, Dory," Jimmy grinned. "Help us put out this fire. Coach says for Billings to drop out. All right, gang, let's go."

But before he could call a signal, he heard a raucous voice yelling at him.

"Hey, where's the nurse, kid? Thought yuh were in the hospital." It was the burly tackle, White, gibing at him.

"They said any cripple could whip you guys," laughed Jimmy. Fight fire with ice. That was it. Ice and fire.

"Come and take me," roared White. "Come on, in here."

"Coming!" retorted Jimmy, pointing the way to his fellow backs. He yelled a signal, and in a jiffy an off-tackle smash was on its way at White. In another jiffy the play stopped, with a gain of only two yards.

"Gimme some more, gimme some more," yelled White.

"Coming up," Jimmy retorted. "Gain this time!" Ice on the fire! White was mad, crazy to make a showing. Wanted to whip the whole Jordan team,—but Jimmy had to collect his thoughts and call his signal. Les Moore jammed through for a yard before White dragged him down.

"Got enough of me?" demanded White.

"Time out," called Jimmy to the referee. "Hey, gang," and he gathered the team around him. He pulled Moore, and Hawkins, still surprised at staying in the game as a half-back, and Johnson and Billy Armstrong around him closest.

"Some of the children hurt?" derided White.

"We're about to be talked to death," Caldwell retorted.

Jimmy whispered for a minute, nodding his head vigorously as he spoke. Caldwell interrupted to suggest a surprise forward pass. Jimmy was insistent. He knew how to fight fire! Hadn't he been putting out a fire for an hour, now? With ice? Yes, icing the fire. Caldwell agreed. The whistle blew.

"Come on, come on, I'll take you," yelled White, again on the rampage.

"Right at you," shouted Jimmy. "No signal, big boy. Gimme the ball!" And he turned and thrust

it sharply into the arms of Dory Hawkins, charging off White's tackle. With another yell, White thrashed into the play, and stopped it for a loss of a yard. Things looked blue for Jordan, and Tippecanoe exulted. White yelled in derision, and pushed his hand into Dory's face to boost himself up from the ground.

Jimmy, without waiting to see whether the team had lined up as by prearrangement during the huddle, barked a short sharp signal. He knew how to fight fire. Let White fight, and roar, and cripple his opponents! Ice, ice! But his brain was working like a clock.

"Eight, sixty-one, forty-three, nineteen,——"

"Come on, come on, show me up again, hey?" roared White, as he charged.

But even as he charged he saw he had been tricked again, for Jimmy sidestepped the pass to let it go straight to Hawkins. Jimmy and Les rushed hard at White. But Johnson veered off outside at the same time, and Hawkins followed. Billy deserted his momentary attack on White and whirled out to the right to block the end coming in. Going wide of the tackle, but inside Billy's end, Johnson and Hawkins raced like twin motorcycles on a track. Johnson drove head-long into the half-back coming up to help White, and Hawkins, Jimmy's old enemy, flashed past at full speed for an easy touch-down!

As he went over the goal-line, he wondered why Jimmy had given him the honor. But Jimmy was past wondering about anything. He crashed into White's shoulder, and White, raging at being tricked again after all the fighting he had done, ground him down, a shoulder against Jimmy's breast-bone, and a hard fist against Jimmy's eyes.

"Fire's out," muttered Jimmy, with a grin. And he remained on the ground after the stack-up had

cleared. He heard none of the tumult, nor saw any of the snake-dance or wild celebrations that began at the moment and lasted an hour. When the trainer had carried him off the field, Jimmy's head began to clear. Les kicked goal. Jordan fourteen, Tippecanoe seven.

"But, Sam," exclaimed Coach Phillips, in the dressing-room, "you and the doctor have got to straighten him out. Good heavens, man, can't you see he's——"

"I know how to put out fires," muttered Jimmy weakly, opening his eyes. He lay stretched out on a rubbing table. His fever had gone, now, leaving him utterly exhausted. A football season including four major games and four practise contests, and ten weeks of grueling training, is wearing on a nineteen-year-old youngster of one hundred sixty pounds. "I know how to put out fires. Jake Hilligoss——"

"See, see, Doc?" demanded Coach Phillips. "Out of his head. Do something for him." Then he turned to Jimmy. "Listen, boy, you know how to make a touch-down, too. And how to engineer another one, I'll say."

"Me?" queried Jimmy, with a grin. "All I can do is put out a fire. Jake Hilligoss made that touch-down. He made 'em both. Fight fire with fi—with ice. Ice a fire,—that's it!"

Jake and Les and Billy came up at that moment, dressed to go home. When they heard Jimmy's words, they let out a yell of laughter.

"Shut up, or I'll crown you fellows," exclaimed Coach Phillips. "Can't you see the boy's plumb crazy——"

"Like a fox," added Les and Billy, interrupting quickly. And then they told the story, for the enlightenment of the coach.

"Fireman," laughed Coach Phillips.

"But I made the varsity," mumbled Jimmy wearily.
"And gosh, I'm tired."

"Made the varsity? Tired?" echoed the coach.
"I'll say you made it,—made it into a winning, smart, smashing team for the toughest game of the year! That's job enough to make a man twice your size tired. But listen, fireman," and he laughed as he patted Jim's shoulder, "think how good you'll feel when you're rested."

Jimmy drew a long breath. For the first time he realized how long, how far and how high he had climbed!

THE END

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